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THE POETICAL WORKS OF  
THOMAS TRAHERNE, B.D.







An Hymne upon S<sup>t</sup> Bartholomews Day.

What Powerfull Spirit lvs within!  
What Active Angel both inhabit here!  
What Heavenly Light inspires my Skin,  
Which both so like a DIETIE appear  
of LIVING TEMPLE of all Ages if

Within me see  
of TEMPLE OF ETERNITIE,  
All Kingdoms I desire  
In me.

Oh forward Omnipotence how  
Mysteriously like His within me stands,  
Whose Knowledge is a Sacred Sphere  
That in it self at once includes all Lands.  
There as soon ANGELE & within Me can  
Both Talk & Move  
Shew Walk & flie & see & love  
of Man on Earth, a Man  
Above.

38

Dull Walls of Clay my SPIRIT leav  
died in a foreign Kingdom both appear,  
This Great Apostle it receives,  
Old times ~~show~~ his WORKS, ~~and~~ standing here  
Within my Self from East to West I endow,  
As if I were  
Oh once as CHERUBIM & Seraph.  
One was at once above,  
And here.

Oh Soul, a Messenger who by  
Within me - forward Temple Wandering be  
Even like a very Dietie,  
In all the parts of this Eternitie.  
O live within & leav unworldly Dross  
Flesh as Gut Clay!  
O fly my Soul & flie away,  
To JESUS THRONE, or CROSS  
O beg!

THE POETICAL WORKS OF  
THOMAS TRAHERNE, B.D.  
1636?—1674

NOW FIRST PUBLISHED FROM THE  
ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS

EDITED BY  
BERTRAM DOBELL

*WITH A MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR*

"I give you the end of a golden string,  
Only wind it into a ball,  
It will lead you in at Heaven's gate  
Built in Jerusalem's wall."

*William Blake*

"Heaven lies about us in our infancy."

*William Wordsworth*

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TO  
G. THORN DRURY

My youth was ever constant to one dream,  
Though hope failed oft—so hopeless did it seem,  
That in the ripeness of my days I might  
Something achieve that should the world requite  
For my existence; for it was a pain  
To think that I should live and live in vain:  
And most my thoughts were turned towards the Muse,  
Though long she did my earnest prayers refuse,  
And left me darkling and despairing; then  
By happy chance there came within my ken  
A hapless poet, whom—I thank kind fate!—  
It was my privilege to help instate  
In that proud eminence wherein he shines  
Now that no more on earth he sadly pines.  
This was a fortune such as I must ever  
Be thankful for—yet still 'twas my endeavour,  
With what, I hope, was no unworthy zeal,  
My life-work with some other deed to seal,  
And lo! when such a dream might well seem vain,  
Propitious fate smiled on me once again,  
And through the mists of time's close-woven pall  
A glint of light on one dim form did fall,  
Which, as I gazed more earnestly, became  
A living soul, discovered by the flame  
Of glowing inspiration which possessed  
Even now, as when he lived, the poet's breast.

Did I deceive myself? Could it be true  
A new poetic star was in my view,  
And shining with a lustre bright and clear,  
Where, constellated in the heavenly sphere,  
Herbert and Vaughan, Crashaw and Milton shine  
With varying brightness, yet alike divine?  
I gazed again, but still that star burned on,  
And ever with a deeper radiance shone,  
Until I knew no Will-o'-th'-Wisp's false light,  
No meteor delusive mocked my sight,  
But 'twas indeed a fulgent planet which  
Henceforth shall with its beams the heavens enrich.

Some vanity, I know, is in this strain,  
But men may be with reason sometimes vain:  
Shall he alone who does a worthy deed  
Not pay himself, if so he will, that meed  
Of self-applause from which all virtues spring,—  
Without it who would do a noble thing?  
So let the world arraign me as it will,  
It cannot now my satisfaction chill,  
Since you, dear friend! and all whose praise I prize.  
Look on my labours with approving eyes.

This book to you 'tis fit I dedicate  
Since you, my friend, so well appreciate—  
Nay, rather love, our poets of old time,  
Responding ever to their notes sublime:  
Who, though you treasure most those sons of light,  
Whose radiance glitters on the brow of night,  
Do not despise the faintest twinkling star  
That shines where Shakespeare, Spenser, Milton are:  
Who can, like Lamb, a brilliant flower descry  
Where all seems sterile to the common eye,

Who, like Lamb, too, to no strait bounds confined,  
Have room for all fair fancies in your mind,  
And, with a taste that never errs, discover  
Faults like a censor, beauties like a lover.

Here is another offering for your store,  
Though not arrayed in that brown garb of yore  
Which, with quaint type and paper stained with age,  
Were for the Spirit of our Poet-Sage,  
A fitter dwelling, more becoming page.  
I could not give him these, and so have sought  
To match his noble and exalted thought  
With the best raiment that our time affords  
Of comely type, fine paper, seemly boards,  
Which, centuries hence, to our children's children's eyes  
May have an antique look which they shall prize,  
When Traherne's name, familiar to their ears,  
Shall hold assured a place among his peers.





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\*.\* The poems of which the titles are enclosed within brackets are without titles in the original manuscripts. It seemed better to give them names in order to facilitate reference to them.





## INTRODUCTION

It is with a more than ordinary degree of pleasure that I have undertaken the task of introducing to readers of the present day the writings of a hitherto unknown seventeenth-century poet. Centuries had drawn their curtains around him, and he had died utterly, as it seemed, out of the minds and memories of men ; but the long night of his obscurity is at length over, and his light henceforth, if I am not much mistaken, is destined to shine with undiminished lustre as long as England or the English tongue shall endure. The reader will think that this is a bold assertion ; but it is one which I am willing to stand by, whatever risk I may thereby incur of being convicted of uncritical extravagance or of want of balanced judgment.

The author of the poems contained in the present volume belongs to that small group of religious poets which includes Herbert, Vaughan, and Crashaw, though he is much more nearly allied to the authors of "The Temple" and "Silex Scintillans" than to the

lyrist of Roman Catholicism. But he is neither a follower nor an imitator of any of these, but one who draws his inspiration from sources either peculiar to himself or made his own by the moulding force of his own fervent spirit.

Of the inner life of the author of these poems we have abundant and satisfactory knowledge, for it is certain that no man's writings ever furnished a clearer or more faithful mirror of their author's personality than do those of Thomas Traherne. But of the outward incidents of his life little can be told, though that little, it is gratifying to say, is all to his credit. Profession and practice in his case went together, and he was no less admirable as a man than he was as a poet and a minister of religion. That he was a person of great sweetness of disposition, of most happy temperament, and of singularly attractive character, is certain ; and to know so much of a man is to know everything we really need to know. We cannot help, however, craving for more than this, and we would give much indeed for such a record of Traherne as Walton gave of Hooker, Herbert, Donne, and Sanderson. It is likely, indeed, that other particulars of Traherne's career will in time be discovered ; but for the present the reader must be content with the scanty details which are given in the following pages.

I regret to say that the inquiries which I have made, or caused to be made, as to the time and place of Thomas Traherne's birth have been, so far, without result. Probably he was born at Hereford, since his

father was a shoemaker in that town ; but this is not certain. He may have been born at Ledbury, which is a village a few miles from Hereford, for it seems pretty certain that his family was in some way connected with that place. The earlier portion of the registers of that village has been printed by the Parish Registers Society, and from this it appears that there were "Trayernes" there in the sixteenth century. Unfortunately the portion of the Ledbury registers which covers the period during which it is probable that our author was born is missing. That also seems to be the case as regards the Hereford registers of the same period. This is very disappointing ; but we may hope that further inquiries may prove more successful.

That the family from which the poet sprang was Welsh by descent seems to be highly probable. It is true that the name is also found in a slightly different form in Cornwall ; but no doubt both branches sprang from the same root at some distant period. The poet's character and temperament, as displayed in his writings, almost proclaim his nationality. Herbert and Vaughan, the two poets to whom he is most near akin, were both Welsh by descent, and though neither of them is deficient in warmth of feeling, Traherne certainly surpasses them in the passionate fervour which he infuses into his writings. It is hardly possible to conceive of them as having emanated from the cooler and calmer temperament of the Anglo-Saxon.

All that I am able to say, then, as to the time of Traherne's birth is that it was probably in the year

1636. Wood informs us that he became a commoner of Brasenose College, Oxford, in 1652 ; and as the age at which it was then usual for youths to commence their college career was about sixteen, the above date seems the most likely one, though it may, of course, have been a year earlier or later. His father was in all probability the "John Traherne, Shoemaker," who is recorded to have received, in conjunction with another person, "from Mistress Joyce Jefferies the sum of three pounds for the shipping money."\* This lady is also recorded to have paid money to one John Traherne (who may or may not have been the same person) for training as the soldier whom she had to provide for the Trained-bands.

John Traherne, it seems likely, was related to a man of considerable note and influence in Hereford. This was Philip Traherne (the name is sometimes spelt Traheron), who was twice mayor of Hereford. He was born in 1566, and was noted for his fidelity to the cause of King Charles I., and, to follow the eulogium upon his tombstone, "for his fervent zeal for the Established Church and clergy, and friendly and affectionate behaviour in conversation, which rendered him highly valuable to all the loyal party." He was mayor of Hereford at the time when the Scots attacked it. He died in 1645, aged 79. It would thus appear that the Traherne family was one which occupied a fairly good position in the middle class of the community. It would seem, however, from a passage in Traherne's

\* See "Archæologia," vol. xxxvii. p. 204.

"Centuries of Meditations" ("Sitting in a little obscure room in my father's poor house") that John Traherne's circumstances were not very flourishing.

Of the poet's infancy and youth, the only source of information we have is that which we find in his own writings. That the poems in which he dwells so lovingly, and with so much enthusiasm, upon the happiness and innocence of his infancy are somewhat coloured by the warmth of his imagination may, perhaps be suspected, but not, I think, with justice. It is possible that he, to some extent, confused reflections of later date with those which he represents himself to have experienced in his infancy; but he was evidently a very precocious child, and the dawn of consciousness and thought was surely much earlier in him than it is in ordinary children. I think, therefore, we may trust the evidence of the poems, in which he speaks of his infancy and childhood, as affording a true, or but little idealised, picture of his early life. It might be unsafe to depend upon the evidence of the poems if they stood alone, but the earnestness with which he dwells upon the same topic, and repeats in prose (in his "Centuries of Meditations") what he asserts in his verse, is sufficiently convincing. I know of no author whose writings convey to the reader a stronger conviction of their author's entire sincerity and absolute truthfulness than do those of Thomas Traherne.

Traherne's "Centuries of Meditations" consists of a series of reflections on religious and moral subjects, divided into short numbered paragraphs. The manu-

script (which was probably written in the last years of his life, and therefore contains his most mature thoughts) comprises four complete "Centuries," and ten numbers of a fifth "Century." From the fact that it was left unfinished it would seem that his labour upon it was cut short by his death. It was written for the benefit and instruction of a lady, a friend from whom he had received as a present the book in which it is written. It bears the following inscription on the first page :

" This book unto the friend of my best friend,  
As of the wisest love a mark, I send,  
That she may write my Maker's praise therein,  
And make herself thereby a cherubim."

In the third "Century" of the "Meditations" we find many details of the author's infancy and childhood. I cannot do better than give the greater part of these in the author's own words :

## I

Will you see the infancy of this sublime and celestial greatness? Those pure and virgin apprehensions I had in my infancy, and that divine light wherewith I was born, are the best unto this day wherein I can see the universe. By the gift of God they attended me into the world, and by His special favour I remember them till now. Verily they form the greatest gift His wisdom could bestow, for without them all other gifts had been dead and vain. They are unattainable by books, and therefore I will teach them by experience. Pray for them earnestly, for they will make you angelical and wholly

celestial. Certainly Adam in Paradise had not more sweet and curious apprehensions of the world than I when I was a child.

## II

All appeared new and strange at first, inexpressibly rare and delightful and beautiful. I was a little stranger which at my entrance into the world was saluted and surrounded with innumerable joys. My knowledge was Divine; I knew by intuition those things which since my apostacy I collected again by the highest reason. My very ignorance was advantageous. I seemed as one brought into the estate of innocence. All things were spotless and pure and glorious; yea, and infinitely mine and joyful and precious. I knew not that there were any sins, or complaints or laws. I dreamed not of poverties, contentions, or vices. All tears and quarrels were hidden from mine eyes. Everything was at rest, free and immortal. I knew nothing of sickness or death or exaction. In the absence of these I was entertained like an angel with the works of God in their splendour and glory; I saw all in the peace of Eden; heaven and earth did sing my Creator's praises, and could not make more melody to Adam than to me. All Time was Eternity, and a perpetual Sabbath. Is it not strange that an infant should be heir of the whole world, and see those mysteries which the books of the learned never unfold?

## III

The corn was orient and immortal wheat which never should be reaped nor was ever sown. I thought it had stood from everlasting to everlasting. The dust and stones of the street were as precious as gold: the gates were at first the end of the world. The green trees when I saw them first through one of the gates transported and ravished me; their sweetness and



unusual beauty made my heart to leap, and almost mad with ecstasy, they were such strange and wonderful things. The Men! O what venerable and reverend creatures did the aged seem! Immortal Cherubims! And young men glittering and sparkling angels, and maids strange seraphic pieces of life and beauty! Boys and girls tumbling in the street were moving jewels: I knew not that they were born or should die. But all things abided eternally as they were in their proper places. Eternity was manifest in the Light of the Day, and something infinite behind everything appeared, which talked with my expectation and moved my desire. The City seemed to stand in Eden or to be built in Heaven. The streets were mine, the temple was mine, the people were mine, their clothes and gold and silver were mine, as much as their sparkling eyes, fair skins, and ruddy faces. The skies were mine, and so were the sun and moon and stars, and all the world was mine; and I the only spectator and enjoyer of it. I knew no churlish proprieties, nor bounds nor divisions; but all proprieties and divisions were mine, all treasures and the possessors of them. So that with much ado I was corrupted, and made to learn the dirty devices of this world, which now I unlearn, and become, as it were, a little child again that I may enter into the Kingdom of God.

These passages are succeeded in the MS. by the poem entitled "The Approach," which the reader will find at page 30 of the present volume.

In the following sections of the "Meditations" the author tells how these thoughts were first dimmed, and afterwards almost entirely lost owing to the evil influence of those around him. It is clear that his parents failed to appreciate the fact that their child was of a very uncommon type, and that the ordinary methods of dealing with children were inapplicable in his

case. His early and innocent thoughts, he says, were quite obliterated by the influence of a bad education. He found that those around him were immersed in the trivial cares and vanities of common life ; that they were wholly wrapped up in the outward shows of things, and were moved only by common and mercenary motives. Alas ! this is the discovery that every poet makes, and it is this which constitutes the tragedy of life for him. Had any one, Traherne says, spoken to him on the great and sublime truths of God and Nature ; had he been taught that God was good, and had made him the sole heir of a glorious universe ; had he been assured that earth was better than gold, and water, every drop of it, a precious jewel, he would have thankfully received and gladly believed the lessons. But instead of this they tried to instil into his mind the lessons of selfishness and worldly wisdom.

## IX

It was a difficult matter to persuade me that the tinselled ware upon a hobby horse was a fine thing. They did impose upon me and obtrude their gifts that made me believe a ribbon or a feather curious. I could not see where was the curiousness or fineness. And to teach me that a purse of gold was at any value seemed impossible, the art by which it becomes so, and the reasons for which it is accounted so were so deep and hidden to my inexperience. So that nature is still nearest to natural things, and farthest off from preternatural ; and to esteem that the reproach of nature is an excuse in them only who are unacquainted with it. Natural things are glorious, and to know them glorious ; but to call things preternatural

natural, monstrous. Yet all they do it who esteem gold, silver, houses, land, clothes, &c., the riches of nature, which are indeed the riches of invention. Nature knows no such riches, but art and error makes them. Not the God of Nature, but sin only was the parent of them. The riches of Nature are our souls and bodies, with all their faculties, senses, and endowments. And it had been the easiest thing in the whole world [to teach me] that all felicity consisted in the enjoyment of all the world, that it was prepared for me before I was born, and that nothing was more divine and beautiful.

Surely Traherne was here anticipating much which seems to belong to a far later date ! The doctrine here urged is in essentials the same as that which was insisted upon by Rousseau and other philosophers of the eighteenth century. Shelley himself hardly enforced the idea of the return to nature more strenuously than Traherne does in this passage. "Natural things are glorious and to know them glorious"—is not this the whole burden of Walt Whitman's poetry ? Nay, is it not the whole burden of all poetry worthy of the name ?

## X

Thoughts are the most present things to thoughts, and of the most powerful influence. My Soul was only apt and disposed to great things ; but souls to souls are like apples, one being rotten rots another. When I began to speak and go, nothing began to be present to me but what was present to me in their thoughts. Nor was anything present to me any other way than it was so to them. The glass of imagination was the only mirror wherein anything was represented or appeared to me. All things were absent which they talked not of. So I

began among my playfellows to prize a drum, a fine coat, a penny, a gilded book, &c., who before never dreamed of any such wealth. Goodly objects to drown all the knowledge of Heaven and Earth! As for the Heavens and Sun and Stars they disappeared, and were no more unto me than the bare walls. So that the strange riches of man's invention quite overcame the riches of nature, being learned more laboriously and in the second place.

By this, Traherne proceeds, parents and nurses should learn the right way of teaching children. Nothing is easier than to teach the truth because the nature of the thing confirms the teaching; whereas to teach children to value "gugaus," baubles, and rattles puts false ideas into their heads, and blots out all noble and divine thoughts, rendering them uncertain about everything, and dividing them from God. "Verily," he says, "there is no savage nation under the cope of Heaven that is more absurdly barbarous than the Christian World. . . . I am sure that those barbarous people that go naked come nearer to Adam, God, and Angels in the simplicity of their wealth, though not in knowledge."

#### XIV

Being swallowed up therefore in the miserable gulf of idle talk and worthless vanities, thenceforth I lived among shadows, like a prodigal son feeding upon husks with swine. A comfortless wilderness full of thorns and troubles the world was or worse: a waste place covered with idleness and play, and shops, and markets, and taverns. As for churches they were things I did not understand, and schools were a burden:

so that there was nothing in the world worth the having or enjoying but my game and sport, which also was a dream, and being passed wholly forgotten. So that I had wholly forgotten all goodness, bounty, comfort, and glory; which things are the very brightness of the Glory of God, for lack of which therefore He was unknown.

## XV

Yet sometimes in the midst of these dreams I should come a little to myself, so far as to feel I wanted something, secretly to expostulate with God for not giving me riches, to long after an unknown happiness, to grieve that the world was so empty and to be dissatisfied with my present state because it was vain and forlorn. I had heard of Angels and much admired that here upon earth nothing should be but dirt and streets and gutters. For as for the pleasures that were in great men's houses I had not seen them: and it was my real happiness they were unknown. For because nothing deluded me I was the more inquisitive.

## XVI

Once I remember (I think I was about four years old) when I thus reasoned with myself. Sitting in a little obscure room in my father's poor house: If there be a God certainly he must be Infinite in Goodness, and that I was prompted to, by a real whispering instinct of nature. And if He be Infinite in Goodness and a perfect Being in Wisdom and Love, certainly He must do most glorious things and give us infinite riches; how comes it to pass, therefore, that I am so poor? Of so scanty and narrow a fortune, enjoying few and obscure comforts? I thought I could not believe Him a God to me unless all His power were employed to glorify me. I knew not then my Soul or Body, nor did I think of the Heavens and the Earth, the

Rivers and the Stars, the Sun or the Seas : all those were lost and absent from me. But when I found them made out of nothing for me, then I had a God indeed whom I could praise and rejoice in.

## XVII

Sometimes I should be alone and without employment, when suddenly my Soul would return to itself, and forgetting all things in the whole world which mine eyes had seen, would be carried away to the end of the earth, and my thoughts would be deeply engaged with inquiries—How the Earth did end? Whether walls did bound it or sudden precipices? Or whether the Heavens by degrees did come to touch it, so that the faces of the Earth and Heaven were so near that a man with difficulty could creep under? Whatever I could imagine was inconvenient, and my reason being posed was quickly wearied. What also upheld the Earth (because it was heavy) and kept it from falling ; whether pillars or dark waters? And if any upheld these, what then upheld those, and what again those, of which I saw there would be no end? Little did I think that the Earth was round and the World so full of Beauty, Light, and Wisdom. When I saw that, I knew by the perfection of the work there was a God, and was satisfied and rejoiced. People underneath and fields and flowers, with another Sun and another Day pleased me mightily ; but more when I knew it was the same Sun that served them by Night that served us by Day.

## XVIII

Sometimes I should soar above the stars, and inquire how the Heavens ended, and what was beyond them? Concerning which by no means could I receive satisfaction. Sometimes my thoughts would carry me to the Creation, for I had heard now that the World which at first I had thought was Eternal

had a beginning: how therefore that beginning was, and why it was; why it was no sooner, and what was before I mightily desired to know. By all which I easily perceived my Soul was made to live in communion with God in all places of his dominion, and to be satisfied with the highest reason in all things. After which it so eagerly aspired that I thought all the gold and silver in the world but dirt in comparison of satisfaction in any of these. Sometimes I wondered why men were made no bigger? I would have had a man as big as a giant, a giant as big as a castle, and a castle as big as the Heavens. Which yet would not serve, for there was infinite space beyond the Heavens, and all was defective and but little in comparison; and for man to be made infinite, I thought it would be to no purpose, and it would be inconvenient. Why also there was not a better Sun and better Stars, a better Sea, and better Creatures I much admired. Which thoughts produced that poem upon moderation which afterwards was written.

Following this the author quotes a part of the poem he refers to, which, as it is printed on page 121, need not be given here. The argument of his verses is that everything is for the best and in the best possible proportion:—

“God made man greater while he made him less.”

## XXII

These liquid clear satisfactions were the emanations of the highest reason, but not achieved till a long time afterwards. In the meantime I was sometimes, though seldom, visited and inspired with new and more vigorous desires after that Bliss which Nature whispered and suggested to me. Every new thing quickened my curiosity, and raised my expectation.

I remember once, the first time I came into a magnificent and noble dining-room and was left there alone, I rejoiced to see the gold and state and carved imagery, but when all was dead and there was no motion, I was weary of it and departed dissatisfied. But afterwards when I saw it full of lords and ladies and music and dancing, the place which once seemed not to differ from a solitary den had now entertainment and nothing of tediousness in it. By which I perceived (upon a reflection made long after) that men and women are, when well understood, a principal part of our true felicity. By this I found also that nothing that stood still could, by doing so, be a part of Happiness: and that affection, though it were invisible, was the best of motions. But the august and glorious exercise of virtue was more solemn and divine, which yet I saw not. And that all men and angels should appear in Heaven.

### XXIII

Another time, in a lowering and sad evening, being alone in the field, when all things were dead and quiet, a certain want and horror fell upon me, beyond imagination. The unprofitableness and silence of the place dissatisfied me, its wildness terrified me; from the utmost ends of the earth fears surrounded me. How did I know but dangers might suddenly arise from the East, and invade me from the unknown regions beyond the seas? I was a weak and little child and had forgotten there was a man alive in the earth. Yet something also of hope and expectation comforted me from every border. This taught me that I was concerned in all the world: and that in the remotest borders the causes of peace delight me, and the beauties of the earth, when seen, were made to entertain me: that I was made to hold a communion with the secrets of Divine Providence in all the world: that a remembrance of all the joys I had from my birth ought always to be with me: that the presence of Cities, Temples, and Kingdoms ought to



sustain me, and that to be alone in the world was to be desolate and miserable. The comfort of houses and friends, and the clear assurance of treasures everywhere, God's care and love, His Wisdom, Goodness, and Power, His presence and watchfulness in all the ends of the earth were my strength and assurance for ever: and that those things being absent to my eye were my joys and consolations: as present to my understanding as the wideness and emptiness of the Universe which I saw before me.

## XXIV

When I heard of any new Kingdom beyond the seas the light and glory of it entered into me, it rose up within me, and I was enlarged wonderfully. I entered into it, I saw its commodities, springs, meadows, riches, inhabitants, and became possessor of that new room as if it had been prepared for me, so much was I magnified and delighted in it. When the Bible was read my spirit was present in other ages. I saw the light and splendour of them, the Land of Canaan, the Israelites entering into it, the ancient glory of the Amorites, their peace and riches, their cities, houses, vines, and fig trees, the long prosperity of their Kings, their milk and honey, their slaughter and destruction, with the joys and triumphs of God's people. All which entered into me, and God among them. I saw all and felt all in such a lively manner as if there had been no other way to those places but in spirit only. This shewed me the liveliness of interior presence, and that all ages were for most glorious ends accessible to my understanding, yea with it, yea within it. For without changing place in myself I could behold and enjoy all those. Anything, when it was proposed, though it was a thousand ages ago being always before me.

Some few other passages relating to Traherne's boyhood might be quoted; but as I hope soon to publish

the "Centuries of Meditations" in complete form, it is hardly necessary to print further extracts here. I have quoted enough, I trust, to create a desire in the reader's mind to see the whole work in print. I have found the narrative so interesting myself that I would fain hope it will be not less so to others. It displays with a vividness seldom equalled the eager, enthusiastic, thoughtful, affectionate, and, above all, poetic character of its author. It was doubtless owing to the fact that he retained in his manhood so much of the fresh, unspoiled, and uncorrupted spirit of his youth that he was able to give such an engaging picture of his early years. It bears the stamp of veracity and sincerity in every line ; and leaves no room in the reader's mind (as so many autobiographies do) for the suspicion that the author was posing himself in the most favourable light, and suppressing the darker shades of his portraiture. I do not think there is anything resembling it in English literature ; nor could more than one or two other English poets have written such a narrative. It is fortunate indeed that the "Centuries of Meditations," which so narrowly escaped destruction or oblivion, should have been preserved to afford us this valuable record of the inner life of a spirit touched to such fine issues as was that of Thomas Traherne.

Turning from the brilliant illumination of our author's own account of his youthful experiences it is very disappointing to find that no information about him from external sources can be discovered before the time when he became an Oxford undergraduate. But we may, I

think, conclude with little chance of error that the course of his early life was somewhat as follows : His parents, seeing the precocity and unusual promise of their child, determined to give him the best education within their power, and therefore sent him to the local Grammar School. This was founded by Bishop Gilbert in 1386. While there he must have distinguished himself so much by his good conduct and aptitude for learning that some patron—or perhaps some of his relatives who were in a better position than his father—furnished the means to enable him to proceed to Oxford and become a student there. His course at the University is thus related in the *Athenæ Oxonienses* :

“ Thomas Traherne, a shoemaker's son of Hereford, was entered a Commoner of Brasen-nose College on the first day of March, 1652, took one degree in Arts, left the House for a time, entered into the sacred function, and in 1661 he was actually created Master of Arts. About that time he became Rector of Credinhill, commonly called Crednell, near to the city of Hereford . . . and in 1669 Bachelor of Divinity.”

To the above it may perhaps be as well to add the exact dates of the degrees bestowed upon him at the University. He was made Bachelor of Arts on October 13, 1656; Master of Arts on November 6, 1661; and Bachelor of Divinity on December 11, 1669. Why or when he “left the House for a time” does not appear; possibly it was on account of the political troubles of the period.

When at the University we may be certain that Traherne's inclination and natural genius would lead him to study for the ministry; and he was undoubtedly an earnest and diligent student of the history and doctrines of the Christian faith, and more especially of those of the Church of England. He found in that communion his ideal Church. We have seen that Philip Traherne, the Mayor of Hereford, was noted for his "fervent zeal for the Established Church and clergy"—and probably we shall not be wrong in thinking that the Trahernes generally were members of the English Church. That circumstance doubtless had its influence in determining the faith of Thomas Traherne; but his own deeply fervent and religious nature found in the national faith, as George Herbert had found before him, the peace and satisfaction which he could find nowhere else. That the Anglican Church can boast of having attracted to its service such fine spirits as those of Herbert, Vaughan, Traherne, and the many others that might be mentioned, is surely one of its greatest honours.

We have the evidence of Antony à Wood and that of Traherne's book entitled "Roman Forgeries" to prove that he was an unwearied student of the antiquities of the Church, of its Fathers, Councils, and Doctrines. But the best evidence on this point is to be found in the "Advertisement to the Reader" prefixed to "Roman Forgeries." Herein the author gives us a lively account of a discussion which took place between himself and a Roman Catholic gentleman on the questions in dispute

between the two Churches. This passage must be quoted in full, for the story is so vividly told that the reader becomes almost a spectator of the scene :

Before I stir further I shall add one passage which befel me in the *Schools* as I was studying these things, and searching the most old and authentic records in pursuance of them. One evening as I came out of the Bodleian Library, which is the glory of Oxford, and this nation, at the stairs-foot I was saluted by a person that has deserved well of scholars and learning, who being an intimate friend of mine, told me there was a gentleman, his cousin, pointing to a grave person, in the quadrangle, a man that had spent many thousand pounds in promoting Popery, and that he had a desire to speak with me. The gentleman came up to us of his own accord : we agreed, for the greater liberty and privacy, to walk abroad into the New Parks. He was a notable man, of an eloquent tongue, and competent reading, bold, forward, talkative enough ; he told me, that the Church of Rome had eleven millions of martyrs, seventeen Oecumenical Councils, above one hundred Provincial Councils, all the Doctors, all the Fathers, Unity, Antiquity, Consent, &c. I desired him to name *one* of his eleven millions of martyrs, excepting those that died for treason in Queen Elizabeth's and King James his days : for the martyrs of the primitive times, were martyrs of the *Catholic*, but not of the *Roman Church* : they only being martyrs of the Roman Church, that die for *Transubstantiation*, the *Pope's Supremacy*, the doctrine of *Merits*, *Purgatory*, and the like. So many he told me they had, but I could not get him to name one. As for his Councils, Antiquities and Fathers, I asked him what he would say, if I could clearly prove that the Church of Rome was guilty of *forging* them, so far that they had published *Canons* in the *Apostles* names, and invented *Councils* that never were, forged *letters* of Fathers, and *Decretal Epistles*, in the name of the first Bishops and Martyrs of Rome, made 5, 6, 700 years after they

were dead, to the utter disguising and defacing of antiquity, for the first 480 years next after our Saviour? "Tush, these are nothing but lies," quoth he, "whereby the Protestants endeavour to disgrace the Papists." Sir, answered I, you are a scholar, and have heard of Isidore, Mercator, James Merlin, Peter Crabbe, Laurentius Surius, Severinus Binius, Labbè, Cossartius, and the *Collectio Regia*, books of vast bulk and price, as well as of great majesty and magnificence: you met me this evening at the Library door; if you please to meet me there to-morrow morning at eight of the clock, I will take you in; and we will go from class to class, from book to book, and there I will first shew in your own authors, that you publish such instruments for good *Records*: and then prove, that those instruments are downright frauds and forgeries? "What hurt is that to the Church of Rome?" said he. No! (cried I, amazed) Is it no hurt to the Church of Rome, to be found guilty of *forging Canons* in the *Apostles* names, and *Epistles* in the *Fathers'* names, which they never made? Is it nothing in *Rome* to be guilty of counterfeiting *Decrees* and *Councils*, and *Records* of *Antiquity*? *I have done with you!* whereupon I turned from him as an obdurate person. And with this I thought it meet to acquaint the Reader.

No other particulars of Traherne's university career are now available, but those which I have related are sufficient to show that it was not an unsuccessful one. It is plain that he made his way entirely by his own ability, for he could hardly have had any other means of advancing himself.

It appears from a passage in our author's "Centuries of Meditations" that there was at one time a conflict in his mind as to his future course in life. He debated with himself as to whether he should pursue the path that might lead to worldly prosperity, at the cost

of sacrificing or suppressing his higher aspirations, or whether he should, at the risk of poverty and obscurity, follow out the promptings of his better self. Such a conflict, in his case, could have only one result :

When I came into the country, and being seated among silent trees and woods and hills, had all my time in mine own hands, I resolved to spend it all, whatever it cost me, in the search of Happiness, and to satiate the burning thirst which Nature had enkindled in me from my youth. In which I was so resolute that I chose rather to live upon ten pounds a year, and to go in leather clothes and to feed upon bread and water, so that I might have all my time clearly to myself, than to keep many thousands per annum in an estate of life where my time would be devoured in care and labour. And God was so pleased to accept of that desire that from that time to this I have had all things plentifully provided for me without any care at all, my very study of Felicity making me more to prosper than all the care in the whole world. So that through His blessing I live a free and a kingly life, as if the world were turned again into Eden, or, much more, as it is at this day.

Truly a memorable resolution ! which has had not too many parallels, though the failure to make it has caused many a man of fine abilities to fall into the ranks of those whom the world has conquered and subdued to its own purposes. One remembers the similar resolution of the great founder of Quakerism, which Traherne might possibly have heard of. One thinks also of Thoreau and of his life in the woods ; and of the few others who have dared to live out their own lives

in their own way, regardless of the disdain or censure of the worldly-minded. That nothing but good came to Traherne from his resolution we might have been sure even if he had not himself told us so ; for what harm *can* come to those who are animated with such a spirit as his? The spiritually-minded derive their sustenance from the things of the Spirit, and are the richer on the ten pounds a year which Traherne speaks of than are the masters of untold wealth who are spiritually destitute. The wealth of a millionaire often becomes an instrument to torment him ; the spiritual riches of a Jacob Behmen, a George Herbert, a Thomas Traherne, or a William Blake never fail to yield them ever-new delight, or to sustain them under every possible worldly discouragement.

At what period Traherne came to the decision which he has thus recorded does not appear ; but it seems probable it was at the time when, as Wood tells us, he left the University for a time. Wood places the commencement of his ministry at Credenhill at about 1661, when he was made Master of Arts. This, however, seems to be an error. Mr. E. H. W. Dunkin has kindly informed me that he has in his possession a copy of a manuscript preserved at Lambeth Library (MS. 998) containing particulars of admissions to Benefices *temp.* Commonwealth, in which the following entry appears :

Thomas Traherne, clerk, admitted 30 Dec., 1657, by the Commissioners for the Approbation of Public Preachers to the Rectory of Crednell, alias Creddenhill, Co. Hereford: patron Amabella, Countess Dowager of Kent.



In 1657 Traherne could not have been more than 21 or 22 years of age—hardly old enough, one would think, to assume entire charge of the parish. Possibly at first he only acted as assistant to the minister whom he afterwards succeeded.

Of the course of Traherne's life at Credenhill nothing is now known, but, as far as outward events were concerned, it was probably quiet and uneventful. He remained there, it would appear, for rather more than one and a half years. Then he was summoned to London to become private chaplain to Sir Orlando Bridgman, who, on August 30, 1667, was created Lord Keeper of the Seals. Whether he owed his promotion to a friend's recommendation, or whether he had, before this time, become personally acquainted with Sir Orlando, we do not know, but it is certain that he must henceforth have been highly esteemed and valued by his patron. When Bridgman was, in 1672, deprived of the Seals, and went into retirement, he still retained Traherne in his service, and it was in his patron's house at Teddington, about three months after the latter's decease, that he died. We may indeed feel certain that a mutual regard and even affection existed between them ; and perhaps it is not too great a stretch of imagination to think that the death of Traherne may have been hastened by his grief at the loss of his patron.

Sir Orlando Bridgman, there can be no doubt, was not only a very able lawyer, but also an honourable, conscientious, and upright statesman. He was, perhaps, a little wanting in strength of character, and therefore

appeared to his contemporaries to be something of a trimmer. He was a royalist, and remained such all through the Civil War and the Commonwealth ; though it appears that during the last years of Cromwell's reign he had in some degree made his peace with the Protector. But he was not disposed to be a mere tool in the hands of the Court party. He was made Keeper of the Seals because it was supposed that he would have been subservient to the designs of the ministry then in power ; but when it was found that he was not disposed to be a compliant tool in their hands he was dismissed from his office. He had nothing in him of a Scroggs or a Jeffries, and was therefore no fit instrument of the crew of unscrupulous and corrupt intriguers who then misruled the country. That he was of a most charitable disposition—though he has not hitherto, I believe, received credit for the fact—we have sufficient evidence. In Traherne's "Christian Ethicks" we find the following passage (p. 471)—"My Lord Bridgman, late Lord Keeper, confessed himself in his Will to be but a Steward of his Estate, and prayed God to forgive him all his offences in getting, mis-spending, or not spending it as he ought to do. And that after many Charitable and Pious Works, perhaps surmounting his estate tho concealed from the notice or knowledge of the world."

It has been seen from one of the extracts quoted from "Centuries of Meditations" that Traherne esteemed himself fortunate in having "all things plentifully provided for me without any care at all, my very study

of Felicity making me more to prosper than all the care in the whole world." That he was perfectly sincere in this statement, and that he had all the riches and advancement he required, is certain ; but very few men, and certainly no ambitious man, under the same circumstances would have made such a declaration. To the worldly-minded his destiny must have seemed a poor, if not a mean one. To be the parson of two small and obscure parishes, and the private chaplain of the Keeper of the Seals, while possessing abilities which would have adorned the highest possible station, must have seemed, to a less happily constituted temperament, a fate which would have justified much repining and discontent. That Traherne was not merely contented but happy under such circumstances is but one more proof that

Happiness to no outward cause we owe,  
From inward sources only doth it flow.

The position of chaplain to Lord Bridgman must have brought Traherne into contact with many distinguished persons of the time ; but no trace of his intercourse with them seems now to be discoverable, save in one instance. John Aubrey, the famous gossip, to whose indiscriminating industry we are indebted for the preservation of much chaff indeed, but also for not a little precious wheat, in his "Miscellanies," under the heading "Apparitions," gives us a remarkable reference to our author. I quote the passage in full :

Mr. Trahern, B.D. (chaplain to Sir Orlando Bridgman, Lord Keeper), a learned and sober person, was son of a shoemaker in Hereford: one night as he lay in bed, the moon shining very bright, he saw the phantom of one of the apprentices, sitting in a chair in his red waistcoat, and head-band about his head, and strap upon his knee; which apprentice was really in bed and asleep with another fellow-apprentice, in the same chamber, and saw him. The fellow was living, 1671. Another time, as he was in bed, he saw a basket come sailing in the air, along by the valence of his bed; I think he said there was fruit in the basket: it was a phantom. From himself.

It is highly probable that it was Aubrey who furnished Wood with the account of Traherne which appears in the *Athenæ Oxonienses*, and doubtless he could have given us much more information about him had he chosen to do so. But he was incapable of appreciating so fine a spirit as Traherne's; nor was the latter likely to reveal to him the profounder depths of his nature. It is much to be regretted that Aubrey gives us such a confused account of what he was told. The stories were doubtless related to him at his own direct request, he being ever eager to collect accounts of the marvellous and the supernatural. It seems evident that Traherne attached little importance to these two visions, purposeless as they apparently were, and as visions of the kind usually are. No one nowadays would attribute such phantoms of the brain to any supernatural cause, nor does it appear that Traherne himself did. I find no trace in his writings of a belief in the common superstitions of his time as to ghosts, witches, or evil spirits.

The date of the interview in which Traherne related these things to Aubrey is fixed by the date given in it (1671) to a period within two or three years of the poet's death. During these latter years he was, according to Wood, minister of the parish of Teddington, Middlesex. It was there that Sir Orlando Bridgman's country residence was situated ; and it was doubtless owing to his lordship's influence that Traherne was appointed minister. That he did hold that position seems to be certain, though, curiously enough, his name does not appear in the list of ministers of the parish which is given in Newcourt's "*Repertorium Ecclesiasticum*." Perhaps this may be accounted for by the fact that though Traherne was actually the working minister, the post was nominally held by a clerical pluralist of the time. The succession of curates as given by Newcourt during the period of Traherne's connection with the parish is as follows: 1664, — Badcock ; 1668, Car. Bryan ; 1673, Joh. Graves ; 1677, Jacobus Elsby.

It was not until the year before his death that the first fruit of Traherne's long and laborious studies was offered to the readers of the time. His poems—or some of them, at least—were written early in life, for he speaks of one of them as having been written "long since" ; but his "*Roman Forgeries*," "*Christian Ethicks*," and "*Centuries of Meditations*" were almost certainly his latest productions. Without undervaluing his two published works, it must be regretted that he did not send to the press in preference to them his poems,

which would then have had the advantage of his own supervision, and would have saved his name from the total obscurity in which it has now been sunk for upwards of two centuries. But doubtless he did not anticipate so untimely an end of his career, and may well have preferred to make his first appearance in print as a serious student and thinker rather than as a poet. I feel sure that he did not undervalue his poems (what poet ever did ?) ; but he must have believed that his prose writings were better calculated to influence the world, as he desired to influence it, than they were. His "Roman Forgeries" and "Christian Ethicks" probably cost him far more labour and hard thought than his poems did ; and authors, it has been observed, usually value most highly the works which have cost them the greatest pains.

It was in 1673 that "Roman Forgeries" was published. There never was a period in the history of England when theological questions were more hotly debated than during the second half of the seventeenth century. Political and theological questions were then far more closely connected than is now the case, so that a double degree of vehemence was imparted to all the subjects of dispute which then divided the nation. Hence it was that a continual flood of partisan books and pamphlets issued from the press, to contemplate which nowadays is to be filled with a melancholy sense of the energy and intellect which our ancestors wasted in angry disputations and futile controversies.

That Traherne should have plunged into this whirlpool of controversy is, I must needs think, matter for regret. His "Roman Forgeries" is, it is true, a very able work; and as to its main contentions a very convincing one. But who does not regret that Milton wasted so much of his genius in barren disputations? The business of controversy—a necessary one it is true, since truth emerges at last from it—is work fitted for men of coarser fibre and finely-balanced intellects than those of Milton and Traherne.

As to the object of the work, the passage which I have quoted from it on p. xxxvi will give the reader a good idea of its scope and purpose. It is, in fact, an indictment of the Roman Church as being guilty of the most flagrant forgeries of documents and falsifications of historical facts for the purpose of supporting its spiritual and temporal pretensions. To those who are able to take any interest in its subject the book is by no means a dull one. Traherne, indeed, felt such a lively concern in his theme that he has succeeded in infusing much of his own animation into his pages. He deals his blows at his adversaries with such hearty good will, and has so much confidence in the justice of his cause, that the reader can hardly fail to sympathise with so earnest a combatant. Yet, as I have said, one can hardly help regretting that the book should have been written, for, well as it is done, it might have been done equally well by a writer of far inferior gifts, while it is impos-

sible not to feel that Traherne was wasting his genius in its composition.\*

Within twelve months after the publication of "Roman Forgeries" its author was dead. But he had, during the few months of life still left to him, finished another long and elaborate work. This was his "Christian Ethicks," a work of much more value and interest than his first book, though it seems to have fallen still-born from the press, and to have remained neglected and unknown ever since.

The satisfaction of seeing his second work in print was denied to its author. He had sent it to the press, but was dead before the printing of it was commenced. Sir Orlando died on June 25, 1674, and was interred in the church at Teddington, where a monument was erected to him. Three months afterwards Traherne died in his patron's house, and was also buried in the church at Teddington under the reading-desk. Of the exact date of his decease we are ignorant, but he was buried on October 10, 1674.

\* "Roman Forgeries" must have had some popularity in its time, for it is, unlike "Christian Ethicks," a tolerably common book. Fifteen years after its publication Dean Comber, a writer of some note in his day, published a work of similar character, and with the same title. As Traherne's book was published anonymously, Dean Comber has usually received credit for that as well as for his own work. The Dean was a man of considerable ability, and he would hardly have been pleased had he been told that he would only be remembered in future times as the writer who helped himself to a striking title at the expense of one who was much greater than himself.



About a fortnight before his death, Traherne sent for his friend, John Berdo, and his sister-in-law, Susan Traherne, and in their presence made his Will—a nuncupative one. This Will, which I have to thank my friend, Gordon Goodwin, for communicating to me, was registered in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. It is a curious and interesting document, and I have therefore printed it in full in the Appendix to the present volume. From its terms, it is very evident that Traherne had accumulated no wealth, and that he died possessed of little indeed beyond his books and other personal effects.

At the time of his death Traherne was probably not more than thirty-eight years of age, but certainly under forty. He was thus in the very prime of life, and his intellect was in its fullest vigour. Had he lived he would surely have produced a succession of works which would have sensibly enriched our literature, for his industry was not less remarkable than his ability and his learning. As it was his career must have seemed to those who were capable of appreciating his fine qualities a failure, for his books brought him little reputation; and beyond the mention of him in the *Athenæ Oxonienses*, his name quickly sank into entire oblivion, so to remain for upwards of two centuries. A strange fate! the strangest, perhaps, that ever befell an author of such fine genius. During all this period his manuscripts were lying unknown and neglected, and exposed to all the accidents of time and chance. Yet not altogether so, for it seems that those

into whose hands his papers fell had at least a dim perception of their value. Twenty-five years after his death a little book stole into the world, the title of which was as follows: "A Serious and Patheticall Contemplation of the Mercies of God, in several most Devout and Sublime Thanksgivings for the same. Published by the Reverend Doctor Hickes at the request of a friend of the Authors." It was the fortunate issue of this work of Traherne's that, after the lapse of upwards of two centuries, was to be the means of identifying him as the author of the poems contained in the present volume, which else might now be masquerading as those of Henry Vaughan. But for this we have not altogether to thank the friend of Traherne's who brought about the issue of the "Serious and Patheticall Contemplation." He certainly laid us under considerable obligations to him when he procured its publication; but his curious idea that it was not to the purpose to tell us the author's name might have caused it to remain for ever unknown but for one clue that he gave us, which ultimately led to its discovery.

The "Serious and Patheticall Contemplation" opens with a letter from the Rev. George Hickes (then a well-known writer on theological subjects), in which he says that the work was recommended to him for publication by "a devout person who was a great Judge of Books of Devotion, having given the world one already which had been well received in three impressions." He intended, he says, to have written a Preface to the book himself, but had received from a friend of the

deceased author an account of him, which rendered it unnecessary for him "who can only tell how greatly the author of them wrote, but knew not how greatly he lived" to fulfil his intention. Dr. Hickes's Letter is followed by an Address "To the Reader," written by Traherne's friend. As this contains the best and most valuable account of our author which has descended to us, I need make no apology for quoting it in full :

Tho' the unhappy decay of true Piety and the Immoralities of the Age we live in may be a discouragement to the multiplying such Books as this, yet on the other hand this degeneracy of Manners, and too evident contempt of Religion makes it (it may be) the more necessary to endeavour to retrieve the Spirit of Devotion and the sacred Fires of Primitive Christianity. And since 'tis hop'd this ensuing Treatise may somewhat conduce to these noble Ends: It is thought to be no unprofitable undertaking to commit it to the Press, it being part of the Remains of a very devout Christian, who is long since removed to the Regions of Beatified Spirits, to sing those Praises and Hallelujahs, in which he was very vigourously employ'd whilst he dwelt amongst us: and since somewhat of *Preface* is become, as it were, a necessary part of every book, instead of any particular *Dedication* (which is commonly overstuffed with Flattery and Complements) I will only give thee some Account of the Author. To tell thee who he was, is, I think, to no purpose: And therefore I will only tell thee what he was, for that may possibly recommend the following Thanksgivings and Meditations to thy use. He was a Divine of the Church of England, of a very comprehensive Soul and very acute Parts, so fully bent upon that Honourable Function in which he was engaged; and so wonderfully transported with the Love of God to Mankind, with the excellency of those Divine Laws which are prescribed to us, and with those

nexpressible Felicities to which we are entitled by being created in, and redeemed to the Divine Image that he dwelt continually amongst these thoughts with great delight and satisfaction, spending most of his time when at home in digesting his notions of these things into writing, and was so full of them when abroad that those who would converse with him were forced to endure some discourse upon these subjects, whether they had any sense of Religion or not. And therefore to such he might be sometimes thought troublesome, but his company was very acceptable to all such as had any inclination to Vertue and Religion. And tho' he had the misfortune to come abroad into the world in the late disordered Times, when the Foundations were cast down, and this excellent Church laid in the dust, and dissolved into Confusion and Enthusiasme; yet his Soul was of a more refin'd alloy, and his Judgment in discerning of things more solid and considerate than to be infected with that Leaven, and therefore became much in love with the beautiful order and Primitive Devotions of this our excellent Church. Insomuch that I believe he never failed any one day either publicly or in his private Closet to make use of her publick Offices, as one part of his devotion, unless some very unavoidable business interrupted him. He was a man of a cheerful and sprightly Temper, free from anything of the sourness or formality by which some great pretenders to Piety rather disparage and misrepresent true Religion than recommend it; and therefore was very affable and pleasant in his conversation, ready to do all good offices to his Friends, and Charitable to the Poor almost beyond his ability. But being removed out of the Country to the service of the late Lord Keeper Bridgman as his Chaplain, he died young and got early to those blissful Mansions to which he at all times aspir'd.

This eulogy of Traherne, it will be observed, was written twenty-five years after his death, when the writer could have had no possible motive to pen it,

beyond a desire to do justice to the memory of his friend. It is a most attractive picture ; but not, I am convinced, one in which truth was sacrificed to flattery. It is exactly what might have been inferred from the poems and "Centuries of Meditations" ; but since it does not always happen that an author's personality tallies with that which might be deduced from his writings, it is fortunate that the impression derived from Traherne's works is thus confirmed by independent evidence. The poet was, it is plain, one of those rare and enviable individuals in whom no jarring element is present, who come into the world as into their rightful inheritance, and whose whole life is a song of thankfulness for the happiness which they enjoy in it. His was indeed

A happy soul that all the way  
To Heaven hath a summer's day,

and though we, who are not so constituted, and who may question whether, in a world which to us seems to give at least as much reason for lamenting as for rejoicing, any man has a right to be so happy as Traherne was, the feeling is perhaps only an outcome of that envy which those who are tortured with a thousand doubts and misgivings must needs entertain for those who enjoy an existence of such entire serenity.

It is fortunate that Traherne's friend, though he did not mention his name, yet gave us a clue to him by mentioning that he was private chaplain to Lord Keeper Bridgeman. Without this clue we should probably have had to remain in ignorance of his author-

ship of the poems contained in this volume : for though there was (as will be seen later on) another clue, it was hidden away so deeply that it is unlikely it would ever have been discovered. Why Traherne's friend should have thought that it was not to the purpose to tell us who he was, and yet gave us such a means of discovering him, is rather a puzzle ; but we have reason to be ever grateful to him for what he has told us, while regretting that he has told us no more.

I must now give some account of Traherne's "Christian Ethicks." It is so rare a book that I have only just obtained a copy of it, after searching for it for nearly two years. Few books surely have had so unfortunate a fate. If there is a better book of its kind in the English language I have not been so lucky as to meet with it. It is a work full of eloquence, persuasiveness, sagacity, and piety, While the author's concern, as might be expected, is chiefly with the spiritual life, he is by no means destitute of worldly wisdom, and he often exhibits a shrewdness and knowledge of human nature which would scarcely be expected from him. Open the book anywhere you please you can hardly fail to discover a fine thought finely expressed. How then shall we account for the fact that the work has remained in total obscurity from the time of its first publication to the present day ? The circumstance that the author died before its appearance, and it was thus thrown into the world without a parent or friend to foster it, was no doubt in some degree accountable for its ill-fortune. It must be allowed,

however, that its want of success was not altogether to be attributed to want of discernment in the public to which it appealed. The author condescends too little to the weakness of ordinary humanity, and ascends too often to heights where it needs an effort to keep pace with or follow him. He is too fond of attempting to solve the insoluble, of debating abstruse points of metaphysics, and of dwelling upon the subtleties of theological speculation. Yet the book, in spite of such defects, is a notable one, and worthy of a better fate than it has met with.

I think the reader—since he is not likely to obtain a copy of “Christian Ethicks,” however much he may desire it—will be glad to see a few extracts from it. And first I will quote a passage from the chapter “Of Magnanimity.” I do this because of its personal interest—for Traherne, in painting the character of a magnanimous man, was, whether consciously or unconsciously, drawing his own portrait. Flattering as the picture may seem, I do not doubt in the least that it is a true one :

Magnanimity and contentment are very near allied ; like brothers and sisters they spring from the same parents, but are of several features. Fortitude and Patience are kindred to this incomparable virtue. Moralists distinguish Magnanimity and Modesty, by making the one the desire of greater, the other of less and inferior honours. But in my apprehension there is more in Magnanimity. It includes all that belongs to a Great Soul : a high and mighty courage, an invincible Patience, an immoveable Grandeur which is above the reach of injuries, a contempt of all little and feeble enjoyments, and

a certain kind of majesty that is conversant with great things ; a high and lofty frame of spirit, allied with the sweetness of Courtesy and Respect ; a deep and stable resolution founded on humility without any baseness ; an infinite hope and a vast desire ; a Divine, profound, uncontrollable sense of one's own capacity ; a generous confidence, and a great inclination to heroical deeds ; all these conspire to complete it, with a severe and mighty expectation of Bliss incomprehensible. It soars up to Heaven, and looks down upon all dominion of fortune with pity and disdain. Its aims and designs are transcendent to all concerns of this little world. Its objects and its ends are worthy of a soul that is like God in Nature ; and nothing less than the Kingdom of God, his Life and Image ; nothing beneath the friendship and communion with Him can be its satisfaction. The terrors, allurements, and censures of men are the dust of its feet : their avarice and ambition are but feebleness before it. Their riches and contentions, and interests and honours, but insignificant and empty trifles. All the world is but a little bubble ; Infinity and Eternity the only great and sovereign things wherewith it converseth. A Magnanimous Soul is always awake. The whole globe of the earth is but a nutshell in comparison of its enjoyments. The sun is its lamp, the sea its fishpond, the stars its jewels, men, angels, its attendants, and God alone its sovereign delight and supreme complacency. The earth is its garden, all palaces its summer houses, cities are its cottages, empires its more spacious Courts, all ages and kingdoms its demesns, monarchs its ministers and public agents, the whole Catholick Church its family, the Eternal Son of God its pattern and example. Nothing is great if compared to a Magnanimous Soul but the sovereign Lord of all Worlds.

\* \* \* \* \*

If you would have the character of a Magnanimous Soul, he is the son of Eternal Power, and the friend of Infinite Goodness, a Temple of Divine and Heavenly Wisdom, that is not imposed upon by the foul and ragged disguises of Nature,



but acquainted with her great capacities and principles, more than commonly sensible of her interests, and depths, and desires. He is one that has gone in unto Felicity, and enjoyed her beauties, and comes out again her perfect Lover and Champion: a man whose inward stature is miraculous; and his complexion so divine that he is king of as many kingdoms as he will look on: one that scorns the smutty way of enjoying things like a slave, because he delights in the celestial way, and the Image of God. He knows that all the world lies in wickedness; and admires not at all that things palpable and near and natural, are unseen, though most powerful and glorious, because men are blind and stupid. He pities poor vicious kings that are oppressed with heavy crowns of vanity and gold, and admires how they can content themselves with such narrow territories: yet delights in their regiment of the world, and pays them the honour that is due unto them. The glorious exaltation of good kings he more abundantly extols, because so many thousand Magnanimous Creatures are committed to their trust, and they that govern them understand their value. But he sees well enough that the king's glory and true repose consists in the Catholick and Eternal kingdom. As for himself he is *come unto Mount Sion, and to the City of the Living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of Angels, to the General Assembly and Church of the First-born, which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant: and therefore receiving a Kingdom which cannot be moved, he desires to serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: and the truth is he can fear nothing else, for God alone is a consuming fire.*

The above passage is a fairly representative one. If the reader is pleased with it, he would be equally pleased with the whole work; if he sees nothing to

admire in it, he may conclude that "Christian Ethicks" is not a book which has any message in it for him.

The following extract is taken from the chapter "Of Charity to our Neighbours":

That which yet further commendeth this virtue of love unto us is that it is the only soul of all pleasure and felicity in all estates. It is like the light of the sun, in all the kingdoms and houses and eyes and ages, in Heaven, in earth, in the sea, in shops and temples, in schools and markets, in labours and recreations, in theatres and fable. It is *the great demon of the world*, and the sole cause of all operations. It is evidently impossible for any fancy, or play, or romance, or fable to be composed well and made delightful without a mixture of Love in the composure. In all theatres and feasts and weddings and triumphs and coronations Love is the Soul and Perfection of all. In all persons, in all occupations, in all diversions, in all labours, in all virtues, in all vices, in all occasions, in all families, in all cities and empires, in all our devotions and religious actions, Love is all in all. All the sweetness of society is seated in Love, the life of music and dancing is Love; the happiness of houses, the enjoyment of friends, the amity of relations, the providence of kings, the allegiance of subjects, the glory of empires, the security, peace, and welfare of the world is seated in Love. Without Love all is discord and confusion. All blessings come upon us by Love, and by Love alone all delights and blessings are enjoyed. All happiness is established by Love, and by Love alone is Glory attained. God knoweth that Love uniteth Souls, maketh men of one heart in a house, fills them with liberality and kindness to each other, makes them delightful in presence, faithful in absence, tender of the honour and welfare of the beloved, apt to obey, ready to please, constant in trials, patient in sufferings, courageous in assaults, prudent in difficulties, victorious and triumphant. All that I shall need to observe further is that it

*completed the Joys of Heaven.* Well, therefore, may wisdom desire Love, well may the Goodness of God delight in Love. It is the sum and glory of his Eternal Kingdom.

The following spirited, vigorous, and eloquent passage is from the chapter "Of Courage":

What a glorious and incomparable virtue this is appeareth from the baseness and ineptitude of its contrary. A coward and an honest man can never be the same; a coward and a constant lover can never be the same; cowardice and wisdom are as incompatible for ever as Love and Wisdom were thought to be of old. A coward is always despicable and wretched, because he dares not expose himself to any hazards, nor adventure upon any great attempt for fear of some little pain and damage that is between him and an excellent achievement. He is baffled from the acquisition of the most great and beautiful things, and nonplust with every impediment. He is conquered before he begins to fight. The very sight of danger makes him a slave. He is undone when he sees his enemy afar off, and wounded before the point of his sword can touch his shadow. He is all ways a terror and burden to himself, a dangerous knave, and a useless creature.

Strange is the vigour in a brave man's soul. The strength of his spirit and his irresistible power, the greatness of his heart and the height of his condition, his mighty confidence and contempt of dangers, his true security and repose in himself, his liberty to dare and do what he pleaseth, his alacrity in the midst of fears, his invincible temper, are advantages which make him master of fortune. His courage fits him for all attempts, makes him serviceable to God and man, and makes him the bulwark and defence of his being and country.

Let those debauched and unreasonable men that deny the existence of virtue contemplate the reality of its excellency here, and be confounded with shame at their prodigious blindness.

Their impiety designs the abolishment of Religion, and the utter extirpation of all faith, and piety, while they pretend the distinction between virtue and vice to be merely feigned for the aweing of the world, and that their names have no foundation in Nature but the craft of politicians and the traditions of their nurses. Are there no base fellows, nor brave men in the world? Is there no difference between a Lion and a Hare? a faint-hearted Coward and a glorious Hero? Is there nothing brave nor vile in the world? What is become of these Rodomontadoes' wits? Where is the boasted glory of their personal valour, if there be no difference but courage and cowardice be the same thing?

I have marked, I find, at least twenty other passages for quotation; and indeed it would be easy to extract from the book enough notable sayings to form a pocket volume of religious and moral philosophy; but I must content myself with only one other quotation. It is from the chapter "Of Knowledge":

The sun is a glorious creature, and its beams extend to the utmost stars; by shining on them it clothes them with light, and by its rays exciteth all their influences. It enlightens the eyes of all the creatures: it shineth on forty kingdoms at the same time, on seas and continents in a general manner; yet so particularly regardeth all that every mote in the air, every grain of dust, every spire of grass is wholly illuminated thereby as if it did entirely shine upon that alone. Nor does it only illuminate all these objects in an idle manner; its beams are operative, enter in, fill the pores of things with spirits, and impregnate them with powers, cause all their emanations, odors, virtues, and operations; springs, rivers, minerals and vegetables are all perfected by the sun; all the motion, life and sense of birds, beasts and fishes dependeth on the same.' Yet the

sun is but a little spark among all the creatures that are made for the Soul; the Soul, being the most high and noble of all, is capable of far higher perfections, far more full of life and vigour in its uses. The sphere of its activity is illimited, its energy is endless upon all its objects. It can exceed the heavens in its operations, and run out into infinite spaces. Such is the extent of knowledge that it seemeth to be the Light of all Eternity. All objects are equally near to the splendour of its beams : As innumerable millions may be conceived in its Light, with a ready capacity for millions more ; so can it penetrate all abysses, reach to the centre of all Nature, converse with all beings, visible and invisible, corporeal and spiritual, temporal and eternal, created and increated, finite and infinite, substantial and accidental, actual and possible, imaginary and real ; all the mysteries of bliss and misery, all the secrets of heaven and hell are objects of the Soul's capacity, and shall be actually seen and known here.

It seems strange indeed that no compiler in search of material for a book of selections, no student in search of forgotten excellence, no seeker for wisdom conjoined with piety, has ever lighted in his search upon "Christian Ethicks." But it came into the world in a time of general dissoluteness of manners, and amid the jarrings of contending sects and the venomous contests of political parties. Probably very few copies of the book were sold, and its rarity in after times has prevented it from becoming known to any one who had the will and the power to proclaim its merits.

I have attempted to account for the book's want of success by attributing it partly to the abstruse nature of some portion of its contents ; but, on further considera-

tion, I am inclined to withdraw that suggestion. It is only a comparatively small portion of the work which can be charged with the defects I have indicated. In the greater part of its contents its style is as easy and luminous as it could possibly be made. As the reader will have observed, there is a vividness and liveliness in it which is very unusual in books of its kind. On almost every page we meet with short, pithy axioms and aphorisms which might well pass for proverbial sayings were they represented as such. I doubt if there is any book in our language which is richer in epigrammatic expressions and sententious maxims.

The following selection of these *obiter dicta* has been taken not from the whole book, but from a few pages only of it :

A physician may kill a man with the best ingredients: but good medicines are those wherein every simple hath its proper dose, and every composition a fit admixture of good ingredients.

Temperance everywhere yields the pleasure: and excess is as destructive as deficit in any accomplishment whatsoever; virtue being seated in the golden mean, it is by an artificial limiting of power that everything is made as it ought to be, complete and perfect.

A little touch of something like pride is seated in the true sense of a man's own greatness, without which his humility and modesty would be contemptible virtues.

An airy humour without something of the melancholy to ballast it a little would be light and trifling; and a melancholy

humour without something of air and jovialness in it too sour and disobliging.

Anger without softness is like untempered steel, brittle and destructive; and a pliant humour without some degree of stiffness, too near to flattery and servility.

Plainness without policy is downright simplicity, and policy without plainness void of honesty.

There is not one humour, nor inclination, nor passion, nor power in the soul that may not be admitted to act its part when directed by temperance.

Magnanimity despiseth the courtship of worms, and scorneth to place its rest and felicity in trifles.

Temperance takes off the stupidity and sluggishness of our meekness; puts activity and vigour into it that it may not be a sheepish but heroic virtue; nay, adorns, secures, and perfects it by the addition and exercise of all these; and by giving to every virtue its form and perfection, makes them more fit and able to assist us here.

It is a vain and insipid thing to suffer without loving God or man. Love is a transcendent excellence in every duty, and must of necessity enter into the nature of every grace and virtue. That which maketh the solid benefit of Patience unknown, its taste so bitter and comfortless to men is its *death* in the separation and absence of its Soul. We suffer but Love not.

For virtues to lie asleep in the soul, and for virtues to be actually and fully perfected is as great difference as for a vine to be of a generous kind and prone to bear, but to remain without fruit, or for a vine to bring forth, and to be really laden with all the bunches of grapes that beautify it. The excellency of its nature is vain if its fruit be never brought

to perfection. There is a glory in the work which the silent habit is incapable of.

Patience is a virtue whose element is in miseries : it owes its being to pains and calamities : were there no miseries there would be no patience. Evils are its playfellows, it feeds upon sorrows, thrives by disadvantages, grows rich by poverties : it must needs surmount all opposition, for the more it endures the greater it is.

Whatever opinion the reader may form of "Christian Ethicks," after having read the foregoing extracts, I think he will at least allow that it is a book good to steal from, as Pope said of Beaumont's "Psyche."

"Poetry," says Milton, if he be indeed the author of "Nova Solyma," "is the impetuous rush of a mind full to overflowing, strained, exalted to its utmost powers, yea, rather, lifted into ecstasy beyond itself."\* Could we accept this (as we cannot) as a complete definition of the poetic faculty, we might then place Traherne in the very front rank of inspired singers. It would be impossible to give a better description of the leading characteristics of his poetry than that which we find in the words of Milton. Not Milton himself, nor even Shelley, has more of the impetuous rush of a mind lifted into ecstasy beyond itself than Traherne. No poet writes with more absolute spontaneity than he. Whatever may be wanting in him, however he may occasionally fail in expression, he has always this impetuous rush, this ecstasy that rises beyond itself.

\* See "Nova Solyma": an Anonymous Romance. With Introduction, Translation, &c., by the Rev. Walter Begley. 1903.



A glowing ardour of conviction, a passionate spirit of love and devotion, a profound sense of the beauty and sublimity which he saw everywhere around him, a never-failing aspiration towards that Goodness which he believed to be the Fountain and the Ocean, the Beginning and the End of Things, were the sources of his inspiration, the impelling forces of his genius. Where these qualities are present their possessor can never altogether fail in expressing them, however deficient he may be in the technical accomplishments of the poet's art. These things indeed are the root, if not the flower, of all poetry worthy of the name. That Traherne was essentially a poet, we might be certain even if none of his lyrical work had remained to prove it. The man who could say "You never enjoy the world aright till the sea itself floweth in your veins, till you are clothed with the heavens, and crowned with the stars,"—a sentence which contains the essence of everything that has been said by the poets who have sung of the relation between the soul of man and the spirit of Nature—did not need to write in verse in order to prove that he was beyond all question a poet. There is enough of the spirit of poetry in "Christian Ethicks" and "Centuries of Meditations" to set up a dozen versifiers. It was as impossible for Traherne to see things, as a Jeremy Bentham or a Cobbett saw them, as it was for either of the latter to have written the sentence I have just quoted. And who shall say that the light of imagination through which Traherne and those who resemble him behold the universe is a light

which misleads them? Why should we assume that those who view it with eyes that are blind to all but its prosaic aspects are its true interpreters? Whatever else it may be, the universe, it is certain, is a marvellous and stupendous poem; and it is singular indeed if those who are insensible to this truth are able to see it in a clearer light than those who are alive to all its beauty, to all its magnificence, and to all its mystery.

With Traherne poetry was no elegant recreation, no medium for the display of a lively fancy, no means of exhibiting his skill as a master of metrical effects, but the vehicle through which he expressed his deepest convictions and his profoundest thoughts. He used it as a gift, which it was his duty to employ only for the highest purposes and the most sacred ends. All that he saw, felt, and apprehended was transmuted by the alchemy of his mind into that mysterious union of thought, imagination, and expression, which we half praise and half disparage when we term it poetic inspiration. He possessed—or rather was possessed by—that “fine madness” without which no poet, painter, or musician ever yet created a work which deserved to outlive its author. He saw in the universe no “foul and pestilent congregation of vapours,” but a majestic dwelling-place for gods, angels, and men. All Nature to him was lovely and perfect; and if the existence of evil, injustice, and sin disquieted him for a moment he had little difficulty in persuading himself that these things were owing not to defect or imperfection in Nature, but to the folly or perverseness of men in

departing from it. It may indeed be said of him, as Matthew Arnold said of Wordsworth, that his eyes refused to dwell upon the darker aspects of life and Nature ; but that, in his case as in Wordsworth's, was in a great degree the source of his greatness, and the reason why he interests us. It is only those that possess an undoubting faith who can inspire it in others. It is given only to a Shakespeare or a Goethe to "see life steadily and see it whole." Almost all other authors see it, as their nature prompts them, in colours which are either too glowing or too sombre. It has been said of the author of "The City of Dreadful Night" that he was born that we might have things stated at their worst, once for all : \* may we not likewise say of Traherne that he was born that things might be stated, once for all, at their best ? Perhaps the reader may think that his poems do not justify so strong a claim ; but when they are taken in conjunction with his "Christian Ethicks" and "Centuries of Meditations" I do not think it can be considered as an overstatement. Whether his moral and theological

\* "Nature is the great spendthrift. She will burn up the world some day to attain what will probably seem to us a very inadequate end ; and in order to have things stated at their worst, once for all, in English, she took a splendid genius and made him—an army schoolmaster ; starved his intellect, starved his heart, starved his body. All the adversity of the world smote him ; and that nothing should be wanting to her purpose Nature took care that the very sun should smite him also ! Time will avenge him : he is among the immortals."—John Davidson, in *The Speaker*, June 17, 1899.

views were right or wrong, Traherne at least was warranted in holding them, because they were exactly suited to his peculiar temperament, if indeed they were not the outcome of it. Were all men blessed with so happy a disposition as his, then indeed might the world become the Eden which to him it appeared to be. He believed that all men might be as happy as he was if they would only firmly resolve to follow the path which had led him to felicity. Like all enthusiasts and most reformers of human nature or human institutions, he made the mistake of supposing that others were, or might be made, like-minded with himself, and did not take into account the infinite varieties of character and temperament which exist among mankind. But to believe that men are better and nobler is at least a less fault than to believe them to be worse and baser than they are.

To claim for Traherne a place in the front rank of poets is hardly possible. Considering his limited range of subjects, we cannot put him on an equality with the poets who have exhibited more varied powers, and shown a deeper insight into human nature. But, excluding Milton, we may at least place him in the front rank of poets of his class. It is possible my opinion may be somewhat biased by a reason which the reader will be at no loss to divine; but I cannot help thinking that neither Herbert, Crashaw, nor Vaughan can compare with Traherne in the most essential qualities of the poet. He alone has that "impetuous rush of a mind . . . lifted into ecstasy beyond itself" which

Milton, as we have seen, regarded as the chief requisite of poetry. Herbert has a finer sense of proportion, a keener perception of the importance of form and measure; Vaughan appeals more strongly to the common sympathies of mankind; while Crashaw, when at his best, has more fine passages of quintessential poetry, more curious felicities of expression, than Traherne; but none of them has the vitality, the sustained enthusiasm, the power imparted by intense conviction, which we find in our author. Vitality, indeed, seems to me to be the keynote of Traherne's character. That he was himself aware of this we may see from his poem on Contentment:

Employment is the very life and ground  
Of life itself; whose pleasant motion is  
    The form of Bliss:  
All Blessedness a life with Glory crown'd;  
Life! Life is all: in its most full extent  
Stretcht out to all things, and with all Content.

Not, be it observed, the still life of contemplation or inaction, but an active, eager, energetic, enjoying of life, to be so used as to get from it the utmost degree of felicity or blessedness. Traherne repudiates energetically the idea that the more unhappy we make ourselves here the greater will be our happiness hereafter. In his "Centuries of Meditations" he says:

There are Christians that place and desire all their happiness in another life, and there is another sort of Christians that desire happiness in this. The one can defer their enjoyment of wisdom to the world to come, and dispense with the

increase and perfection of enjoyment for a little time; the other are instant and impatient of delay, and would fain see that happiness here which they shall enjoy hereafter. . . Whether the first sort be Christians indeed, look you to that. They have much to say for themselves. Yet certainly they that put off Felicity with long delays are to be much suspected. For it is against the nature of love and desire to defer, nor can any reason be given why they should desire it at last, and not now.

While we may not claim for Traherne's work as a whole that it is of the first order of excellence, we may, I think, make that claim for some of it. We can hardly have a better test of a poet's merits than to inquire how many of his pieces are fit to take their place in such anthologies as the "Golden Treasury," or Mr. Quiller-Couch's "Oxford Book of English Verse." Judged in this way Traherne makes, I think, a very good showing, considering (as I have elsewhere explained) that we possess only a part of his poetical works, and that what we have had probably not received his final revision. Were I asked to name the pieces which, in my opinion, deserve the honour which I have mentioned, I think my first choice would fall upon "The Salutation," "Wonder," "The Approach," "The Circulation," "Desire," "Goodness," and "On News."\* I am not at all sure, however, that this is the best selection that could be made. "Innocence," "The Rapture," "Silence," "The Choice," "The

\*This poem is included in the "Oxford Book of English Verse"; and the Rev. Orby Shipley has included two of Traherne's poems in his "Carmina Mariana."

Person," "The Recovery," "Love," and "Thoughts, I. and II.," have perhaps equal or almost equal claims to be included in a list of Traherne's best work. But individual tastes differ so much that I dare say other readers would make another choice, for Traherne is a remarkably equal writer, and does not often fall below his own level of excellence. Yet all the poems I have mentioned, fine as they are when standing alone, gain considerably when they are read as parts of a continuous poem, the subject of which is the history of the author's progress in his pilgrimage towards the kingdom of perfect Blessedness. He too, like Bunyan's pilgrim, found difficulties and dangers in the way; but with him it was rather a triumphant progress from victory to victory than a long and bitter struggle against enemies who might at any time have overcome him. Very few of his poems dwell upon his discouragements; most of them are songs of rejoicing for victories achieved or happiness attained.

In the last analysis it will always be found that it is the poet himself and not his poetry that has the greatest interest for us. Unless he is interesting in himself he will not interest us in his writings. No amount of study and pains will suffice to render the work of a shallow and commonplace personality interesting to us. From the strong only shall sweetness come forth. I do not know whether I have succeeded in any degree in convincing the reader that Traherne was, both as a man and as a poet, a very interesting character; but if I have not the fault assuredly is mine and not his. We may

study him in two aspects : firstly, as a representative of the poetic temperament ; and secondly, as a representative of the religious idiosyncrasy in conjunction with the poetic—for religion in many of its professors is often enough altogether disjoined from any tincture of poetry. In both aspects we have ample materials for studying him, and I cannot help thinking that few writers of his age are better worth studying. My own work is that of a pioneer only, and I must now leave it to others to supplement and complete my labours.

Were Traherne a smaller man than he is, and therefore less able to afford to have the whole truth told about him, I should hesitate long before printing the following remarks on some of his shortcomings. It is the less needful to attempt to conceal his defects, since they are for the greater part the defects of his qualities, and therefore inseparable from them. Constituted as he was, it was not possible for him to see things in a wholly clear and uncoloured light. He is elevated so high above ordinary humanity that he is unable to see clearly what is so much beneath him. Nor is it always easy for us, the dwellers upon the plain, to ascend to his altitude. He is so exempt from the ordinary failings of humanity that we feel almost as if he belonged to a different race. He died a bachelor, and I do not find any evidence in his writings to show that he ever experienced the passion of love in relation to the female sex. His love for the divine seems to have swallowed up all thought of sexual love, though not his love for humanity in the mass. He is sometimes so mystical or



metaphysical that the ordinary reader finds it difficult to comprehend him. But, after all, if the reader will only exercise a little patience and be at the expense of a little thought, he will not find it hard to understand the poet, even in his most difficult passages. Those who are able to follow Browning through all his intricacies will find no knot in Traherne which they will not easily unravel.

The charge which is most likely to be pressed against Traherne is that he appears to have been a man of few ideas, and is consequently much given to repetition of thoughts and even of words and phrases. That there is some foundation for this charge may be admitted, but it is nevertheless unjust. No one, after an examination of his manuscripts and of his two published works, could believe it. A scholar so well versed in the classics, a student so eager for knowledge of all kinds, a thinker so acute, could not possibly be a man of narrow ideas and restricted sympathies. What is true, however, is that his mind dwelt with so much love and delight upon certain thoughts that it was continually recurring to them, setting them in different lights, and repeating them with ever-new variations, even as a musician will execute ever-new variations upon a favourite theme. Those who care for Traherne's themes will not complain that he dwelt too much upon them.

It must be owned, I think, that while Traherne is usually happy in the selection of his themes, he is sometimes less happy in developing and expressing them. Lines which leave something to be desired in

smoothness (though he is not usually chargeable with this fault, his handling of the heroic couple being particularly good), and now and then lines which to our modern ideas appear to be somewhat prosaic are certainly to be found in his poems, and do, to a small extent, interfere with the reader's pleasure in them. But for such faults as these we ought surely to make large allowance. The reader should, and doubtless will, remember that he has before him a work for which the author himself has but a limited responsibility. Had he himself published the poems we should have been entitled to think that he deliberately chose to give them to the world with all their faults upon them. As it is, I think we may assume that had he done so they would have made their appearance before the world in a more perfect form than they now do. Most of their defects are such as might be easily remedied, and such, indeed, as it was sometimes hard to refrain from remedying. But I have resisted all such temptations, and have confined myself to the task of making the printed text as nearly as possible a reproduction of the original manuscripts. The reader will gather from the facsimile of one of Traherne's poems, which I have given as a frontispiece to this volume, a good general idea as to the character of his handwriting, his spelling, and his punctuation. It would have been an interesting thing could the whole of Traherne's poems have been reproduced in the same style, for, as the reader will see, there is a picturesqueness, a beauty, and a life about the manuscripts which

is lost in the cold regularity of type. Some readers may perhaps think that it would have been better to follow the author's original spelling and punctuation ; but after giving full consideration to this point, it did not seem advisable to do this. Traherne's spelling is by no means uniform—Deity, for instance, is sometimes "Dietie" and sometimes "Deitie"—and his punctuation, which is, I think, quite peculiar to himself, differs so much from our modern practice, that if it had been reproduced without modification it would often have obscured his meaning and puzzled the reader without any compensating advantage.

Traherne, as will be perceived from the frontispiece, made much use of capital letters and occasionally of italics in his writings. This was the custom of the time, as any one who examines a seventeenth-century printed book will see. I have preserved most of his italicised passages and some of his capitals in cases where they seemed to lend an emphasis to the author's thoughts which would otherwise be wanting ; but where they seemed unnecessary or merely obtrusive to modern eyes, I have suppressed them. In the case of the poems taken from "Christian Ethicks," I have preserved the old spelling very nearly as it appears in the book.

Traherne, so far as English authors were concerned, was very little indebted to his predecessors. He was, of course, greatly influenced by the writers of the Old and New Testaments, from whom he is continually quoting in his "Christian Ethicks." Next to the Scriptures, the book which seems most to have influenced

him was that ancient mystical and philosophical work which is attributed to Hermes Trismegistus. Those who are well acquainted with that remarkable production will find frequent traces of its influence in the prose and verse of Traherne. He gives several extracts from it in "Christian Ethicks," and in his "Commonplace Book" there are continual references to it. It might almost be said that, after the Bible, it was his chief manual of philosophy and of Divine wisdom.

That Traherne was well acquainted with the writings of Herbert is evident from the fact that in one of his manuscript books he has copied out that writer's poem, "To all Angels and Saints"; but I do not find any traces of Herbert's influence upon him either in prose or verse. Nor do I find any proof that he was acquainted with the writings of Vaughan. The resemblance between Traherne's line,

How, like an Angel came I down,

and Vaughan's reference to his "angel infancy" is probably no more than an accidental coincidence. Though their points of view were similar in many respects, Traherne possessed a much stronger personality than Vaughan, and therefore had little or nothing to learn from him. It is likely enough that he owed something to Donne, as most of the poets of his time did; but I do not find any clear indications of that poet's influence in his writings. Traherne's style, indeed, is that of his age, but as to his matter, few poets, I think, can boast of more originality.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about Traherne's poetry is that it anticipates so much that seems to belong to much later periods of our literary history. Traherne, indeed, is likely to suffer to some extent in his reputation because ideas which with him were certainly original—or at least as much so as any ideas in any poets can be said to be original—have since become commonplaces in our literature. The praise of the beauty and innocence of childhood is familiar enough to us now, and has, perhaps, in some instances been carried to a rather ridiculous extreme. That certainly was not the case in Traherne's time. So far as I know, he was the first who dwelt upon those ideas in any other than an incidental and allusive manner. It is true that we find in Vaughan some passages of a similar tendency, but they are few and slight in comparison with those which we find in Traherne. If there are similar passages in other poets previous to, or contemporary with, the latter, I must confess that I am unacquainted with them. Nor were the poetical possibilities of the theme discovered until more than a century afterwards, when William Blake, who by the light of genius—or shall we say lunacy?—discovered so much else, discovered them. It was fitting, indeed, that Blake, whose youthful experiences seem to have more nearly resembled Traherne's than those of any other poet, should have followed all unknowingly in the elder writer's footsteps. Had he ever sat down to record the events of his infancy and childhood, Blake's narrative, I think, however different in detail, must have been like

that of his predecessor in its chief features. I do not believe that there is any point out of all those which I have quoted respecting Traherne's childhood which Blake might not also have recorded of himself. Much as they differed in matters of faith, there was a deep and fundamental agreement in character and temperament between the two poets. To both of them the things seen by their imaginations were more real than the things seen with the eye, and to neither of them was there any dividing line between the natural and the supernatural. Their faiths were founded upon intuition rather than reason, and they were no more troubled by doubt or disbelief than a mountain is. Their capacity for faith was infinite, and stopped short only when their imagination failed them—if it ever did fail them.

Another poet with whom Traherne has some remarkable affinities is Wordsworth—not the Wordsworth of later life, when his poetic vein, if not exhausted, had at least grown thin and unproductive, but the Wordsworth of the magnificent ode, "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood." Let the reader once more peruse that poem, and note carefully the leading points in it. Then let him, bearing in mind the foregoing extracts from Traherne's "Centuries of Meditations," go carefully through the various poems in which the earlier poet celebrates the happiness of his infancy and childhood. When he has done this, let him ask himself if he would have believed that Wordsworth was unacquainted with Traherne's writings,

supposing that they had been published before the later poet's time ? I cannot think myself that it would have been easy in that case to think that the modern poet was entirely unindebted to the older one. It is hardly too much to say that there is not a thought of any value in Wordsworth's Ode which is not to be found in substance in Traherne. Of course, I do not say this with any view of disparaging Wordsworth, whose Ode, even if it had been, as we know it was not, derived from Traherne, would still have been a masterpiece. Its merit, like that of Gray's "Elegy," depends at least as much upon its form as upon its substance, and that, of course, was all Wordsworth's own. It is in a measure a testimony to the authentic character of their inspiration when two poets, unknown to each other, produce works which are so nearly identical in substance and spirit.

The reader will remember that Traherne in his youth determined to follow the bent of his own inclination at whatever cost of poverty or want of worldly success. That was the case also with Wordsworth. Another point in which, as it seems to me, they resembled each other was in the matter of poetic style. At first sight, indeed, there does not appear to be any likeness between them in this respect ; yet, allowing for the difference in their times and their temperaments, I think we may find a good deal of similarity. Traherne's style, allowing for the nature of his subjects, is always simple and direct. His aim is to affect the minds of his readers by the weight of his thought and the enthusiasm of his

utterance, not to astonish them by far-fetched metaphors or delight them with dulcet melodies. He has no ornament for ornaments' sake, and he never attempts to clothe his "naked simple thought" in silken raiment or cloth of gold. He does not indulge in the metaphysical conceits and ingenuities with which the works of Donne and Cowley are so plentifully besprinkled. "Poetic diction" was as little sought for by him as by Wordsworth. He did not, however, fall into the error that Wordsworth sometimes did of mistaking puerility for simplicity. I do not wish to press this point too far. I only desire to show that both poets were more solicitous about the substance than the form of their poetry. Wordsworth would have heartily endorsed the doctrine of Traherne that the best things are the commonest, and that natural objects and not artificial inventions are the true well-springs of delight.

Though the reader will, I hope, have agreed with my contention that Traherne anticipated a good many poetical ideas which have been thought to belong to much later dates, I can hardly expect him to accept without demur the claim I am now about to make on the poet's behalf. That Traherne had a considerable genius for metaphysics will be evident to any one who reads his "Christian Ethicks," or who studies at all carefully the contents of the present volume. But to claim that he was the originator of the metaphysical system which, since it was first made known, has created more discussion and exercised more influence than any



other has done, will probably seem at first to be a very extravagant assertion. Yet that he had at least a clear prevision of that famous system which is known as the Berkeleian philosophy is, I think, incontestable. That theory, it seems to me, could hardly be stated in a clearer or more precise manner than it is in Traherne's poem entitled "My Spirit." I am much mistaken if the theory of "the non-existence of independent matter," which is the essence of Berkeley's system is not to be found in this poem—not, it is true, stated as a philosophical dogma, but yet clearly implied, and not merely introduced as a flight of poetical fancy. It seems to me that if the following stanza from that poem is not altogether meaningless, no other construction can be placed upon it than that its author was a Berkeleian before Berkeley was born :

This made me present evermore  
With whatsoe'er I saw.  
An object, if it were before  
My eyes, was by Dame Nature's law  
Within my soul. Her store  
Was all at once within me : all Her treasures  
Were my immediate and internal pleasures,  
Substantial joys which did inform my Mind.  
With all She wrought  
My Soul was fraught  
And every object in my Heart a Thought  
Begot or was ; I could not tell  
Whether the things did there  
Themselves appear,  
Which in my Spirit truly seem'd to dwell ;  
*Or whether my conforming Mind*  
*Were not even all that therein shin'd.*

The idea that matter has no existence apart from its istence in the Spirit of the Eternal, or in the soul of an is surely clearly, if not positively, advanced in the st six lines of the above stanza. The thought, so angely fascinating to a poet—and Berkeley no less an Traherne was one—that the whole exterior universe is not really a thing apart from and independent man's consciousness of it, but something which exists ly as it is perceived, is undeniably to be found in *My Spirit*." I have quoted only one stanza of it, but e whole poem should be carefully studied, for it is roughout an assertion of the supremacy of mind over matter, and an averment that it is the former and not e latter which has a real existence. If it be thought at it is going too far to say that the Berkeleian system is to be found in the poem—which of course it is t as a reasoned-out and complete theory—it yet cant be denied that it is there in germ, and in such a m that it only required to be seized upon by an acute ellect to be developed in the way Berkeley developed

That the latter knew nothing of Traherne's poem is tain, and therefore I am not attempting to detract in y way from the credit which belongs to him : I am ly anxious to give the poet his due as the first who ight a glimpse of so notable a truth or error—which-er it may be.\*

It is not only in "*My Spirit*" that we find traces of Traherne's Berkeleianism. See the "*Hymn on St. Bartholomew's y*," "*The Preparative*," and various passages in other poems. lo not contend, however, that we have the idea in a clear i unmistakable form anywhere but in "*My Spirit*."

Deeply as Traherne was penetrated with a sense of the glory of the universe, and of the infinite greatness of its Creator, it was with no sense of abasement that he contemplated them. He felt that in his own soul were capable of the sublimest conceptions and the loftiest exalted aspirations, there must needs be a divine element. He was no outcast thrust out of Eden into the wilderness of spiritual destitution, but the son of a loving Father, born to a splendid inheritance, and at least as necessary to the Deity as servants and dependents are to keep up the state and dignity of a king. If God confers benefits on man it is in order that He may witness man's delight in them and gratitude for them. To see this is a supreme delight to Him, and without it there would be something wanting to human felicity. But I must quote a stanza from "The Coventry" lest the reader should think that I am misrepresenting the poet :

For God enjoy'd is all his End.  
Himself He then doth comprehend  
When he is blessed, magnified,  
Extoll'd, exalted, prais'd and glorified,  
Honor'd, esteem'd, belov'd, enjoy'd  
Admired, sanctified, obey'd,  
That is received. For He  
Doth place His whole Felicity  
In that, *who is despised and defied,*  
*Undeified almost if once denied.*

Matthew Arnold said of Goethe that he

Neither made man too much a God  
Nor God too much a man.

That could hardly be said of Traherne. It is scarcely possible, I think, to deny that in the above-quoted passage he committed the fault of making "God too much a man." That, however, was a fault which he shared with most of the theologians of his time. Perhaps it is a fault which is almost inseparable from a sincere and fervent faith. Without refining away the conception of God to a mere abstraction it is impossible to think of Him otherwise than as an infinitely magnified and glorified man. Since the human mind is so constituted, it is surely vain to attempt to set limits within which we are to think of Him. Every man will do this according to the law of his own temperament. The man of cool reason and well-controlled passions will form a very different conception of the Deity from the man of enthusiastic disposition and ardent emotions. To think of the Deity as "a power not ourselves which makes for righteousness" is no more possible for a Traherne, than it is for an Arnold to think of God as One

who is despised and defied,  
Undeified almost if once denied.

To make all men think alike, whether on political, moral, or theological subjects, is now seen, by all but a very few reactionaries, to be an impossible task. It is needless to defend Traherne for the views he took regarding the relations between God and man ; I have only thought it expedient to show that the line he followed was that to which he was impelled by the character of his individuality.

An excellent poet, a prose-writer of equal or perhaps greater excellence, an exemplary preacher and teacher, who gave in his own person an example of the virtues which he inculcated, one with whom religion was not a garment to be put on, but the life of his life and the spring of all his actions—such was Thomas Traherne. Much as my own opinions differ from his, I have found it easy to appreciate the fineness of his character, and the beauty of his writings. It is not necessary that we should believe, as Traherne believed, in order to derive benefit from his works. Men of all faiths, or even of no faith, may study them with profit, and derive from them a new impulse towards that “plain living and high thinking,” by which alone happiness can be reached and peace of mind assured.

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It remains for me to tell the strange story of the fate of Traherne's manuscripts after his death. They passed, we may reasonably suppose, together with his books, into the hands of his brother Philip, as directed in his will. Philip Traherne, I imagine, was in some way—perhaps by marriage—connected with a family named Skipp, which dwelt at Ledbury, in Herefordshire. These Skipp appear to have become the owners and custodians of the poet's remains ; and in their hands they probably rested down to the year 1888, when it seems that the property belonging to the family was dispersed. Into what hands the Traherne manuscripts then fell cannot now be ascertained ; but it was certainly into hands that were ignorant of their value. In the

latter part of 1896, or the early months of 1897, some of them had descended to the street bookstall, that last hope of books and manuscripts in danger of being consigned to the waste-paper mills. Here, most fortunately, two of them were discovered by my friend, Mr. William T. Brooke, who acquired them at the price of a few pence. They could hardly have fallen into better hands, for Mr. Brooke's knowledge of our poetical literature, and especially of sacred poetry and hymnology is no less remarkable for its extent than for its exactness. As soon as he could find time to examine the manuscripts he at once saw that they were of great interest and value. He could hardly imagine that writings so admirable could be the work of an unknown author; and he at length came to the conclusion, from the fact that the poems resembled those of Henry Vaughan in their subjects and partly in their sentiments, that they must be his. This was an unfortunate idea, since it caused a considerable delay in the tracing out of the real author. Mr. Brooke communicated his discovery to the late Dr. Grosart, who became so much interested in the matter that he at length purchased the two manuscripts. He, too, after some waverings of opinion, during which he was disposed to attribute the manuscripts, first to Theophilus Gale, and secondly to Thomas Vaughan, became convinced that they must be Henry Vaughan's. Under this persuasion he prepared for the Press a most elaborate edition of Vaughan's works, in which the matter contained in the manuscripts was to be included. This

edition he was, at the time of his death, endeavouring to find means to publish. That the work thus projected was not actually published, must, I think, be regarded as a fortunate circumstance. Whether the poems, on the authority of Dr. Grosart, would have been accepted as Vaughan's, can only be conjectured ; but it seems probable that they would, since it is unlikely that any critic, however much he might have doubted their imputed authorship, would have been able to trace out the real author. An irreparable injury would thus have been inflicted upon Traherne, while Vaughan would have received an unneeded accession of fame, at the expense of puzzling all readers of a critical disposition by the exhibition of inconsistent and irreconcilable qualities.

Upon Dr. Grosart's death his library was purchased by the well-known bookseller, Mr. Charles Higham, of Farringdon Street. Included in it were the two Traherne manuscript volumes. Having learned from Mr. Brooke the story of the manuscripts, and that they were in Mr. Higham's hands, I became interested in the matter, and ultimately purchased them. Afterwards, when a part of Dr. Grosart's library was sold at Sotheby's, I became the possessor of the third manuscript volume, which their late owner appears not to have known to be Traherne's, though nothing is needed but to compare it with the other volumes in order to see that all three are in the same handwriting.

It is due to Mr. Higham to say that he most liberally allowed me to examine the manuscripts before purchasing them, so that I might form my own opinion as

to their authorship. I need not say that I should have been delighted if I could have come to the same conclusion that Mr. Brooke and Dr. Grosart had arrived at. Inclination and interest alike impelled me to take their view. But when I sat down to read the poems and to compare them with the acknowledged writings of Henry Vaughan, I soon began to doubt, and it required but a little time for that doubt to develop into a conviction that whoever might have been their author, they were assuredly not written by the Silurist. It is true that the poems deal, as most of Vaughan's do, solely with religious or moral subjects, and that the author dwells continually, as Vaughan did, upon the subjects of childhood and innocence ; and that both authors display the same love of nature and of a simple and natural life. It is true also that we find both poets making use of some rather uncommon words and phrases, and that we find in both the same free use of defective rhymes. These resemblances, however, are merely superficial. In all the deeper matters of style, thought, and temperament, Traherne and Vaughan were as far apart as any two men, animated as both were by a deep spirit of piety and beneficence, could well be. To me, had there been no other difference, one striking note of dissimilarity would have sufficed to prove that the poems in manuscript and those of Vaughan could not have proceeded from the same pen. In the manuscript poems an ever-present quality is a passionate fervour of thought, an intense ardour of enthusiasm, which is not to be found, or at least only



rarely, in Vaughan's works. Restrained emotion, expressed in verse which moves slowly and not without effort, is, it seems to me, the leading characteristic of Vaughan's poetry ; emotion in full flood, expressed in lively and energetic diction, is that of Traherne's. With Traherne all nature is bathed in warmth and light : with Vaughan we feel sensible of a certain coolness of temperament, and are conscious that he rejoices rather in the twilight than in the radiance of noonday.

With the conviction that the poems could not be Vaughan's, while yet it seemed unlikely that they could be the work of an altogether unknown or unpractised writer, I began to search for indications by which their author might possibly be discovered. Here again I found Mr. Brooke's assistance most valuable. To an edition of Giles Fletcher's "Christ's Victory and Triumph," which he had edited, he had appended a number of previously uncollected seventeenth-century poems. Among these was one entitled "The Ways of Wisdom." To this poem he now drew my attention, as he had previously drawn Dr. Grosart's. It was at once evident to me that its style was very similar to that of the manuscript poems. In fact that poem, as any reader will see who cares to study it in comparison with the other poems in this volume, presents such strong resemblances and parallels with them that it is hardly too much to say that the question as to their common authorship might have been rested entirely upon it. However, it was of course desirable to find further evidence. Mr. Brooke told me that he had

found the poem in a little book in the British Museum, entitled "A Serious and Patheticall Contemplation of the Mercies of God, in several most Devout and Sublime Thanksgivings for the same."\* The book, Mr. Brooke also told me, contained other pieces in verse. These I desired him to copy out. When he had done so it at once became evident to me that the author of the manuscript poems and of the "Devout and Sublime Thanksgivings" must be, beyond all doubt, one and the same person. The fact was as clearly demonstrated to my mind as the truths of the multiplication table. That point being settled, the next thing was to discover, if possible, who was the author of the "Devout and Sublime Thanksgivings." That might have remained unknown to the end of time, but for one clue which the book luckily afforded. This was, as the reader has seen, the statement in the "Address to the Reader" that the author was Private Chaplain to Sir Orlando Bridgeman. This clue had only to be patiently followed up to lead to the discovery of the author's name. This Mr. Brooke at last found to be Thomas Traherne. It was from Wood's *Athenæ Oxonienses* that the information was obtained, and from that we also learned that Traherne was the author of two books, "Roman Forgeries" and "Christian Ethicks." The next step was to examine these works to see if any evidence could be found which would connect them with the author of the manuscripts. That evidence was found in "Christian

\* This title was probably the invention of the publisher—one Samuel Keble—and not of the author.

Ethicks." This was the poem which the reader will find on p. 143. The same poem, though in a shorter form and with a good many textual variations, appears in the manuscript "Centuries of Meditations" (see p. 121). Here then was proof positive that Traherne and no other was the author of the manuscripts in my possession. Though I did not require this evidence myself, it was fortunate it was found, since its discovery put the matter beyond all doubt. Will the reader accuse me of undue vanity if I say that it was with a good deal of self-satisfaction, and no little rejoicing, that I welcomed this confirmation of the opinion which I had formed solely upon critical grounds? One might be tempted to think that the whole train of circumstances by which Traherne was discovered, first to be the author of the anonymous "Thanksgivings," and through that of the more important manuscripts, has the appearance of being something more than the work of chance, were it not that their long concealment, their narrow escape from entire destruction, and the fact that the verses printed in the present volume form only a part of Traherne's poetical works, seem to forbid us to entertain such an idea.\*

\* From certain indications in the folio manuscript, from which the bulk of the poems in the present volume are derived, it seems clear that there must be a considerable quantity of verse by Traherne which has not yet been recovered. Appended to several poems in the folio volume are references to other poems, as, for example, at the end of "Innocence," "An Infant Eye, p. 1," and "Adam, p. 12." Other poems thus mentioned are "News," "The Odor," "The Inheritance,"

The manuscripts from which the contents of this book have been derived are three in number. They consist of one folio and two octavo volumes. The folio volume contains all the poems from "The Salutation" to "Goodness," which are here printed. The same volume contains a large number of prose essays and memoranda alphabetically arranged so as to form a kind of commonplace book. The greater part of these are in a handwriting which differs from Traherne's. They appear to have been written by a friend of the poet's, since Traherne has in many cases added remarks of his own to those in the other writer's handwriting. I believe it was Dr. Grosart's intention to print the whole of this material ; but although it certainly has a curious interest, it does not appear to me that it is worth while to publish it at present. Some parts of this commonplace book appear to have been used as material for "Christian Ethicks" and "Centuries of Meditations"; and the whole of it, as might be expected, is more like the notes of a student than the finished work of an essayist.

The second manuscript volume contains Traherne's "Centuries of Meditations," which I have already

"The Evidence," "The Center," and "Insatiableness." As the manuscript volume containing these pieces consisted of at least 142 pages, it seems likely that the present volume contains not more than one half of Traherne's poetical works. It may be hoped, but hardly expected, that the volume containing the poems mentioned above will be some day recovered. Possibly this mention of it may, if it still exists, lead to its eventual discovery.

described and quoted largely from. The third volume contains Traherne's private religious meditations, devotions, and prayers. It is in this latter volume that the "Hymn on St. Bartholomew's Day," a facsimile of which is given as a frontispiece to the present volume, is found.

I must not conclude without thanking my friends, G. Thorn Drury and E. V. Lucas, to both of whom I am indebted for many valuable suggestions. I have also to thank the Rev. Canon Beeching for similar and not less appreciated assistance. Thanks are due also to the Rev. J. C. Foster, who drew my attention to the passage in Aubrey's "Miscellanies" relating to Traherne's visions, and to Miss Isabel Southall, who searched diligently, though without success, to find out the time and place of Traherne's birth. I have already acknowledged my obligations to Mr. W. T. Brooke, Mr. E. H. W. Dunkin, and Mr. Gordon Goodwin.

## THE SALUTATION

### I

These little limbs,  
These eyes and hands which here I find,  
These rosy cheeks wherewith my life begins,  
Where have ye been ? behind  
What curtain were ye from me hid so long,  
Where was, in what abyss, my speaking tongue ?

### II

When silent I  
So many thousand, thousand years  
Beneath the dust did in a chaos lie,  
How could I smiles or tears,  
Or lips or hands or eyes or ears perceive ?  
Welcome ye treasures which I now receive.

### III

I that so long  
Was nothing from eternity,  
Did little think such joys as ear or tongue

To celebrate or see :  
Such sounds to hear, such hands to feel, such feet,  
Beneath the skies on such a ground to meet.

#### IV

New burnisht joys !  
Which yellow gold and pearl excel !  
Such sacred treasures are the limbs in boys,  
In which a soul doth dwell ;  
Their organised joints and azure veins  
More wealth include than all the world contains.

#### V

From dust I rise,  
And out of nothing now awake ;  
These brighter regions which salute mine eyes,  
A gift from God I take.  
The earth, the seas, the light, the day, the skies,  
The sun and stars are mine ; if those I prize.

#### VI

Long time before  
I in my mother's womb was born,  
A God preparing did this glorious store,  
The world, for me adorne.  
Into this Eden so divine and fair,  
So wide and bright, I come His son and heir.

## VII

A stranger here

Strange things doth meet, strange glories see ;  
Strange treasures lodg'd in this fair world appear,  
Strange all and new to me ;  
But that they mine should be, who nothing was,  
That strangest is of all, yet brought to pass.



## WONDER

### I

How like an Angel came I down !  
How bright are all things here !  
When first among His works I did appear  
O how their Glory me did crown !  
The world resembled his *Eternity*,  
In which my soul did walk ;  
And every thing that I did see  
Did with me talk.

### II

The skies in their magnificence,  
The lively, lovely air,  
Oh how divine, how soft, how sweet, how fair !  
The stars did entertain my sense,  
And all the works of God, so bright and pure,  
So rich and great did seem,  
As if they ever must endure  
In my esteem.

### III

A native health and innocence  
    Within my bones did grow,  
And while my God did all his Glories show,  
    I felt a vigour in my sense  
That was all Spirit. I within did flow  
    With seas of life, like wine ;  
I nothing in the world did know  
    But 'twas divine.

### IV

Harsh ragged objects were concealed,  
    Oppressions, tears and cries,  
Sins, griefs, complaints, dissensions, weeping  
    eyes  
Were hid, and only things revealed  
Which heavenly Spirits and the Angels prize.  
    The state of Innocence  
And bliss, not trades and poverties,  
    Did fill my sense.

### V

The streets were paved with golden stones,  
    The boys and girls were mine,  
Oh how did all their lovely faces shine !  
    The sons of men were holy ones,

In joy and beauty they appeared to me,  
And every thing which here I found,  
While like an angel I did see,  
Adorned the ground.

## VI

Rich diamond and pearl and gold  
In every place was seen ;  
Rare splendours, yellow, blue, red, white and  
green,  
Mine eyes did everywhere behold.  
Great Wonders clothed with glory did appear,  
Amazement was my bliss,  
That and my wealth was everywhere ;  
No joy to this !

## VII

Cursed and devised proprieties,  
With envy, avarice  
And fraud, those fiends that spoil even  
Paradise,  
Flew from the splendour of mine eyes.  
And so did hedges, ditches, limits, bounds,  
I dreamed not aught of those,  
But wandered over all men's grounds,  
And found repose.  
Proprieties themselves were mine,  
And hedges ornaments ;

## VIII

Walls, boxes, coffers, and their rich contents  
Did not divide my joys, but all combine.  
Clothes, ribbons, jewels, laces, I esteemed  
My joys by others worn :  
For me they all to wear them seemed  
When I was born.

## EDEN

### I

A learned and a happy ignorance  
Divided me  
From all the vanity,  
From all the sloth, care, pain, and sorrow that  
advance  
The madness and the misery  
Of men. No error, no distraction I  
Saw soil the earth or overcloud the sky.

### II

I knew not that there was a serpent's sting  
Whose poison shed  
On men, did overspread  
The world ; nor did I dream of such a thing  
As sin, in which mankind lay dead.  
They all were brisk and living wights to me,  
Yea, pure and full of immortality.

### III

Joy, pleasure, beauty, kindness, glory, love,  
Sleep, day, life, light,  
Peace, melody, my sight,  
My ears and heart did fill and freely move.  
All that I saw did me delight.  
The Universe was then a world of treasure,  
To me an universal world of pleasure.

### IV

Unwelcome penitence was then unknown,  
Vain costly toys,  
Swearing and roaring boys,  
Shops, markets, taverns, coaches, were un-  
shewn ;  
So all things were that drowned my joys :  
No thorns choked up my path, nor hid the face  
Of bliss and beauty, nor eclipsed the place.

### V

Only what Adam in his first estate,  
Did I behold ;  
Hard silver and dry gold  
As yet lay under ground ; my blessed fate  
Was more acquainted with the old  
And innocent delights which he did see  
In his original simplicity.

## VI

Those things which first his Eden did adorn,

My infancy

Did crown. Simplicity

Was my protection when I first was born.

Mine eyes those treasures first did see

Which God first made. The first effects of Love

My first enjoyments upon earth did prove ;

## VII

And were so great, and so divine, so pure,

So fair and sweet,

So true ; when I did meet

Them here at first, they did my soul allure,

And drew away my infant feet

Quite from the works of men ; that I might see

The glorious wonders of the Deity.

# INNOCENCE

## I

But that which most I wonder at, which most  
I did esteem my bliss, which most I boast,  
And ever shall enjoy, is that within  
I felt no stain nor spot of sin.

No darkness then did overshadow,  
But all within was pure and bright ;  
No guilt did crush nor fear invade,  
But all my soul was full of light.

A joyful sense and purity  
Is all I can remember,  
The very night to me was bright,  
'Twas Summer in December.

## II

A serious meditation did employ  
My soul within, which taken up with joy  
Did seem no outward thing to note, but fly  
All objects that do feed the eye.



While it those very objects did  
Admire and prize and praise and love,  
Which in their glory most are hid,  
Which presence only doth remove.

Their constant daily presence I  
Rejoicing at, did see,  
And that which takes them from the eye  
Of others offered them to me.

### III

No inward inclination did I feel  
To avarice or pride ; my Soul did kneel  
In admiration all the day. No lust, nor strife,  
Polluted then my infant life.

No fraud nor anger in me mov'd  
No malice, jealousy, or spite ;  
All that I saw I truly lov'd.  
Contentment only and Delight

Were in my Soul. O Heav'n ! what bliss  
Did I enjoy and feel !  
What powerful delight did this  
Inspire ! for this I daily kneel.

### IV

Whether it be that Nature is so pure,  
And Custom only vicious ; or that sure

God did by Miracle the guilt remove,  
And made my Soul to feel his Love

So early : or that 'twas one day,  
Wherein this Happiness I found,  
Whose strength and brightness so do ray,  
That still it seems me to surround.

Whate'er it is, it is a Light  
So endless unto me  
That I a world of true delight  
Did then, and to this day do see.

## V

That prospect was the Gate of Heaven, that day  
The ancient Light of Eden did convey  
Into my Soul : I was an Adam there,  
A little Adam in a sphere

Of joys ! O there my ravish't sense  
Was entertained in Paradise,  
And had a Sight of Innocence,  
Which was beyond all bound and price.

An antepast of Heaven sure !  
I on the Earth did reign :  
Within, without me, all was pure :  
I must become a child again.

## THE PREPARATIVE

### I

My body being dead, my limbs unknown ;  
    Before I skill'd to prize  
    Those living stars mine Eyes,  
Before my Tongue or Cheeks were to me shown,  
    Before I knew my hands were mine,  
Or that my Sinews did my Members join,  
    When neither nostril, foot, nor ear  
As yet was seen, or felt, or did appear ;  
    I was within  
A house I knew not, newly cloth'd with skin.

### II

Then was my Soul my only All to me,  
    A living endless eye,  
    Just bounded with the sky,  
Whose power, whose act, whose essence, was to see.  
    I was an inward *Sphere of Light*,  
Or an interminable Orb of *Sight*,

An endless and a living Day,  
*A vital Sun* that round about did ray  
All life, all sense,  
A naked simple pure *Intelligence*.

### III

I then no thirst nor hunger did perceive,  
No dull necessity,  
No want was known to me ;  
Without disturbance then I did receive  
The fair ideas of all things,  
And had the honey even without the Stings.  
A meditating inward eye  
Gazing at quiet did within me lie,  
And every thing  
Delighted me that was their heavenly King.

### IV

For *Sight* inherits beauty, *Hearing* sounds,  
The *nostril* sweet perfumes,  
All *Tastes* have hidden rooms  
Within the *Tongue* ; and *feeling feeling* wounds  
With pleasure and delight : but I  
Forgot the rest, and was all Sight or Eye.  
Unbodied and devoid of care,  
Just as in Heaven the Holy Angels are,  
For simple sense  
Is Lord of all created excellence.

## V

Being thus prepared for all felicity,  
Not prepossess with dross,  
Nor stiffly glued to gross  
And dull materials that might ruin me,  
Nor fettered by an iron fate  
With vain affections in my earthy State  
To any thing that might seduce  
My Sense, or else bereave it of its use,  
I was as free  
As if there were nor sin, nor misery.

## VI

Pure empty powers that did nothing loath,  
Did like the fairest glass,  
Or spotless polished brass,  
Themselves soon in their object's image clothe.  
Divine impressions when they came  
Did quickly enter and my Soul inflame.  
'Tis not the object but the light  
That maketh Heaven : 'tis a purer sight.  
Felicity  
Appears to none but them that purely see.

## VII

A disentangled and a naked sense,  
A mind that's unpossess,

A disengaged breast,  
An empty and a quick intelligence  
Acquainted with the golden mean,  
An even spirit pure and serene,  
Is that where Beauty, Excellence,  
And Pleasure keep their Court of Residence :  
My Soul retire,  
Get free, and so thou shalt even all admire.

# THE INSTRUCTION

## I

Spue out thy filth, thy flesh abjure ;  
Let not contingents thee defile,  
For transients only are impure,  
And aery things thy soul beguile.

## II

Unfelt, unseen, let those things be  
Which to thy Spirit were unknown,  
When to thy blessed Infancy  
The world, thyself, thy God was shown.

## III

All that is great and stable stood  
Before thy purer eyes at first :  
All that in visibles is good  
Or pure, or fair, or unaccurst.

#### IV

Whatever else thou now dost see  
In Custom, Action, or Desire,  
'Tis but a part of Misery  
In which all men at once conspire.



## THE VISION

### I

Flight is but the preparative. The sight  
Is deep and infinite,  
Ah me ! 'tis all the Glory, Love, Light, Space,  
Joy, Beauty and Variety  
That doth adorn the God-head's dwelling place.  
'Tis all that eye can see.  
Even Trades themselves seen in Celestial Light,  
And Cares and Sins and Woes are bright.

### II

Order the beauty even of beauty is,  
It is the rule of bliss,  
The very life and form and cause of pleasure ;  
Which if we do not understand,  
Ten thousand heaps of vain confused treasure  
Will but oppress the land.  
In blessedness itself we that shall miss,  
Being blind, which is the cause of bliss.

### III

First then behold the world as thine, and well  
    Note that where thou dost dwell.  
See all the beauty of the spacious case,  
    Lift up thy pleas'd and ravisht eyes,  
Admire the glory of the Heavenly place  
    And all its blessings prize.  
That sight well seen thy spirit shall prepare—  
    The first makes all the other rare.

### IV

Men's woes shall be but foils unto thy bliss,  
    Thou once enjoying this :  
Trades shall adorn and beautify the earth,  
    Their ignorance shall make thee bright ;  
Were not their griefs Democritus his mirth ?  
    Their faults shall keep thee right.  
All shall be thine, because they all conspire  
    To feed and make thy glory higher.

### V

To see a glorious fountain and an end,  
    To see all creatures tend  
To thy advancement, and so sweetly close  
    In thy repose : to see them shine  
In use, in worth, in service, and even foes  
    Among the rest made thine ;

To see all these unite at once in thee  
Is to behold felicity.

## VI

To see the *fountain* is a blessed thing,  
It is to see the King  
Of Glory face to face : But yet the End,  
The glorious wondrous End is more ;  
And yet the fountain there we comprehend,  
The spring we there adore ;  
For in the End the fountain best is shewn,  
As by effects the cause is known.

## VII

From one, to one, in one to see *All Things*,  
To see the King of Kings  
But once in two ; to see His endless treasures  
Made all mine own, myself the end  
Of all his labours ! 'Tis the Life of Pleasures !  
To see myself His friend !  
Who all things finds conjoin'd in Him alone,  
Sees and enjoys the Holy One.

## THE RAPTURE

### I

Sweet Infancy !  
O fire of heaven ! O Sacred Light !  
How fair and bright,  
How great am I,  
Whom all the world doth magnify !

### II

O Heavenly Joy !  
O great and sacred blessedness  
Which I possess !  
So great a joy  
Who did into my arms convey !

### III

From God above  
Being sent, the Heavens me enflame :  
To praise his Name  
The Stars do move !  
The burning Sun doth shew his Love.

#### IV

O how Divine  
Am I ! To all this sacred wealth,  
This life and health,  
Who raised ? Who mine  
Did make the same ? What hand Divine ?

## THE IMPROVEMENT

### I

'Tis more to recollect, than make. The one  
Is but an accident without the other.  
We cannot think the World to be the Throne  
Of God, unless His *Wisdom* shine as Brother  
Unto His *Power*, in the fabrick, so  
That we the one may in the other know.

### II

His *Goodness* also must in both appear,  
And all the *Children* of His love be found  
In the creation of the *Starry* sphere,  
And in the forming of the *fruitful* ground ;  
Before we can that happiness descry  
Which is the Daughter of the *Deity*.

### III

His *Wisdom* shines in spreading forth the  
sky,  
His *Power's* great in ordering the Sun,  
His *Goodness* very marvellous and high  
Appears in every work His hand hath done.  
And all His works in their variety  
United or asunder please the eye.

### IV

But neither, Goodness, Wisdom, Power, nor  
Love,  
Nor Happiness itself in things could be,  
Did they not all *in one fair Order* move,  
And jointly by their service end in *me*.  
Had He not made an *Eye* to be the Sphere  
Of all things, none of these would e'er  
appear.

### V

His Wisdom, Goodness, Power, as they unite,  
All things in one, that they may be the *Trea-*  
*sures*  
Of one *Enjoyer*, shine in the utmost height  
They can attain; and are most glorious *Plea-*  
*sures*,  
When all the Universe conjoin'd in one,  
Exalts a Creature as if that alone.

## VI

To bring the moisture of far-distant seas  
 Into a *point*, to make them present here,  
 In *Virtue*, not in *Bulk* ; one man to please  
 With all the *Powers* of the Highest Sphere ;  
     From East, from West, from North and South, to  
         bring  
 The pleasing *Influence* of every thing ;

## VII

Is far more *Great* than to create them there  
 Where now they stand ; His *Wisdom* more doth  
     shine  
 In that His *Might* and *Goodness* more appear  
 In recollecting ; He is more *Divine*  
     In making every thing a gift to one  
 Than in the sev'ral parts of all His spacious  
     *Throne*.

## VIII

Herein we see a *marvellous design*,  
 And apprehending clearly the *great skill*  
 Of that Great *Architect*, whose Love doth  
     shine  
 In all His works, we find His *Life and Will*.  
 For *lively counsels* do the *Godhead* shew,  
 And these His *love and goodness* make us  
     know.



## IX

By *Wise Contrivance* He doth all things  
*guide,*  
 And so dispose them that while they unite,  
 For man He endless pleasures doth *provide,*  
 And shows that *Happiness* is His *delight,*  
 His Creatures' happiness as well as His :  
 For that in truth He seeks, and 'tis His  
*bliss.*

## X

O Rapture ! Wonder ! Ecstasie ! Delight !  
 How great must then His *glory* be, how great  
 Our *Blessedness* ! How vast and infinite  
 Our *Pleasure*, how transcendent, how complete,  
 If we the *Goodness* of our God possess,  
 And all *His joy* be in *our blessedness* !

## XI

*Almighty Power* when it is employed  
 For one, that He with *Glory* might be crown'd ;  
*Eternal Wisdom* when it is enjoyed  
 By one whom all its pleasures do surround,  
 Produce a Creature that must, all his  
 days  
 Return the Sacrifice of *Endless Praise,*

## XII

But Oh ! the vigour of mine infant sense  
Drives me too far : I had not yet the Eye,  
The Apprehension, or Intelligence  
Of things so very Great, Divine, and High.  
But all things were *Eternal* unto me,  
And *mine*, and *Pleasing* which mine Eye did see.

## XIII

That was enough at first : Eternitie,  
Infinity, and Love were silent Joys ;  
Power, Wisdom, Goodness, and Felicity ;  
All these which now our Care and Sin destroys,  
By Instinct *virtually* were well discern'd,  
And by their *Representatives* were learn'd.

## XIV

As Sponges gather moisture from the earth  
Whereon there is scarce any sign of dew ;  
As Air infecteth Salt ; so at my Birth  
All these were unperceiv'd, yet near and true :  
Not by reflexion, and distinctly known,  
But by their efficacy all mine own.

## THE APPROACH \*

### I

That childish thoughts such Joys inspire  
Doth make my wonder and His Glory higher,  
His Bounty and my Wealth more great ;  
It shows His Kingdom and His Work complete,  
In which there is not anything  
Not meet to be the Joy of Cherubim.

### II

He in our childhood with us walks,  
And with our thoughts Mysteriously he talks ;  
He often visiteth our Minds,  
But cold Acceptance in us ever finds :  
We send Him often griev'd away ;  
Else would He shew us all His Kingdom's Joy.

In Traherne's "Centuries of Meditations" this poem is  
ceded by the following note : "Upon those pure and virgin  
rehensions which I had in my infancy I made this Poem."

### III

O Lord I wonder at Thy Love,  
Which did my Infancy so early move,  
But more at that which did forbear,  
And move so long, tho' slighted many a year :  
But most of all, at last that Thou  
Thyself shouldst me convert I scarce know how.

### IV

Thy Gracious Motions oft in vain  
Assaulted me : my Heart did hard remain  
Long time : I sent my God away,  
Grieved much that He could not impart His joy.  
I careless was, nor did regard  
The End for which He all those Thoughts prepared.

### V

But now with New and Open Eyes  
I see beneath as if above the skies ;  
And as I backward look again,  
See all His Thoughts and mine most clear and plain.  
He did Approach, He me did woo ;  
I wonder that my God this thing would do.

### VI

From nothing taken first I was ;  
What wondrous Things His Glory brought to pass !

Now in this World I Him behold,  
And me enveloped in more than gold,  
In deep Abysses of Delights,  
In present hidden precious Benefits.

## VII

Those thoughts His Goodness long before  
Prepared as precious and Celestial store,  
With curious art in me inlaid,  
That Childhood might itself alone be said  
My Tutor, Teacher, Guide to be,  
Instructed then even by the Deity.

## DUMBNESS

Sure Man was born to meditate on Things,  
And to contemplate the Eternal Springs  
Of God and Nature, Glory, Bliss, and Pleasure,  
That Life and Love might be his Heavenly Treasure ;  
And therefore Speechless made at first, that He  
Might in himself profoundly busied be :  
And not vent out, before he hath ta'en in  
Those Antidotes that guard his Soul from Sin.

Wise Nature made him deaf, too, that He might  
Not be disturbed, while he doth take Delight  
In inward Things, nor be deprav'd with Tongues,  
Nor injured by the errors and the wrongs  
That *Mortal Words* convey. For Sin and Death  
Are most infused by accursed Breath,  
That flowing from corrupted entrails, bear  
Those hidden plagues which Souls may justly fear.

This, my dear friends, this was my Blessed case ;  
For nothing spoke to me but the fair face  
Of Heaven and Earth, before myself could speak,  
*I then my Bliss did, when my Silence, break.*  
My non-intelligence of human words  
Ten thousand Pleasures unto me affords ;

For while I knew not what they to me said,  
Before their Souls were into mine convey'd,  
Before that living vehicle of Wind  
Could breathe into me their infected Mind,  
Before my Thoughts were leaven'd with theirs,  
before

There any mixture was ; the Holy Door,  
Or Gate of Souls was close, and mine being one  
Within itself to me alone was known.  
Then did I dwell within a World of Light,  
Distinct and separate from all men's sight,  
Where I did feel strange Thoughts, and such things  
see

That were, or seem'd, only reveal'd to me,  
There I saw all the World enjoy'd by one ;  
There I was in the World myself alone ;  
No business serious seem'd but one ; no work  
But one was found ; and that did in me lurk.

D'ye ask me what ? It was with clearer eyes  
To see all Creatures full of Deities ;  
Especially one's self : And to admire  
The Satisfaction of all true Desire :  
'Twas to be pleased with all that God hath done ;  
'Twas to enjoy *even all* beneath the Sun :  
'Twas with a steady and immediate sense  
To feel and measure all the Excellence  
Of Things ; 'twas to inherit endless Treasure,  
And to be filled with everlasting Pleasure :  
To reign in Silence, and to sing alone,  
To see, love, covet, have, enjoy and praise, in one :

To prize and to be ravish'd ; to be true,  
Sincere and single in a blessed view  
Of all His Gifts. Thus was I pent within  
A fort, Impregnable to any Sin :  
Until the Avenues being open laid  
Whole legions entered, and the forts betrayed :  
Before which time a pulpit in my mind,  
A Temple and a Teacher I did find,  
With a large Text to comment on. No Ear  
But Eyes themselves were all the Hearers there.  
And every Stone, and every Star a Tongue,  
And every Gale of Wind a curious song.  
The Heavens were an oracle, and spake  
Divinity : The Earth did undertake  
The office of a Priest ; and I being Dumb  
(Nothing besides was dumb ;) All Things did come  
With voices and instructions ; but when I  
Had gain'd a Tongue, their Power began to die.  
Mine ears let other noises in, not theirs,  
A noise disturbing all my Songs and Prayers.  
My foes pull'd down the Temple to the ground ;  
They my adoring Soul did deeply wound  
And casting that into a swoon, destroy'd  
The Oracle, and all I there enjoy'd.  
And having once inspir'd me with a sense  
Of foreign vanities, they march out thence  
In troops that cover and despoil my coasts,  
Being the invisible, most Hurtful Hosts.

Yet the first words mine infancy did hear,  
The things which in my Dumbness did appear,



Preventing all the rest, got such a root  
Within my heart, and stick so close unto 't,  
It may be trampled on, but still will grow  
And Nutriment to *Soil* itself will owe.

*The first Impressions are Immortal all :*  
And let mine Enemies hoop, cry, roar, or call,  
Yet these will whisper if I will but hear,  
And penetrate the Heart, if not the ear.

## SILENCE

A quiet Silent Person may possess  
All that is Great or High in Blessedness.  
The Inward Work is the Supreme : for all  
The other were occasioned by the fall.  
A man that seemeth idle to the view  
Of others, may the Greatest Business do.  
Those acts which Adam in his Innocence  
Performed, carry all the excellence.  
Those outward busy Acts he knew not, were  
But meaner matters of a lower Sphere :  
Building of Churches, giving to the poor,  
In Dust and Ashes lying on the floor,  
Administering of Justice, preaching peace,  
Ploughing and toiling for a forc't increase,  
With visiting the sick, or governing  
The rude and ignorant : this was a thing  
As then unknown. For neither Ignorance  
Nor Poverty, nor Sickness did advance  
Their banner in the World till Sin came in :  
Those therefore were occasioned all by Sin.  
The first and only Work he had to do,  
Was in himself to feel his bliss, to view

His sacred Treasures, to admire, rejoice,  
Sing Praises with a sweet and Heavenly voice,  
See, Prize, give hourly thanks within, and Love,  
Which is the High and only Work above  
Them all. And this at first was mine ; These were  
My exercises of the Highest Sphere.  
To see, approve, take pleasure, and rejoice  
Within, is better than an empty voice.  
No melody in words can equal that ;  
The sweetest Organ, Lute, or Harp is flat  
And dull, compared thereto. And O that still  
I might admire my Father's love and skill !  
This is to Honour, Worship, and Adore ;  
This is to love Him : nay, it is far more,  
It is to enjoy Him, and to imitate  
The Life and Glory of His high Estate.  
'Tis to receive with Holy Reverence,  
To understand His gifts, and with a sense  
Of pure Devotion and Humility,  
To prize His works, His Love to magnify.  
O Happy Ignorance of other things  
Which made me present with the King of Kings !  
And like Him too ! All Spirit, Life, and Power,  
All Love and Joy, in His Eternal Bower.  
A World of Innocence as then was mine,  
In which the joys of Paradise did shine ;  
And while I was not here I was in Heaven,  
Not resting one, but every day in seven ;  
For ever minding with a lively sense  
The universe in all its Excellence.

No other thoughts did intervene, to cloy,  
Divert, extinguish, or eclipse my joy,  
No other customs, new-found wants, or dreams  
Invented here polluted my pure streams.  
No aloes or drugs, no wormwood star  
Was seen to fall into the sea from far.  
No rotten Soul did like an Apple near  
My Soul approach. There's no contagion here.  
An unperceived Donor gave all pleasures ;  
There nothing was but I, and all my Treasures.  
In that fair World One only was the Friend,  
One Golden Stream, one Spring, one only End.  
There only one did sacrifice and sing  
To only one Eternal Heavenly King.  
The union was so strait between them two,  
That all was either's which my soul could view :  
His Gifts and my possessions, both our Treasures ;  
He mine, and I the ocean of His pleasures.  
He was an ocean of Delights from Whom  
The Living Springs and Golden Streams did come :  
My bosom was an ocean into which  
They all did run. And me they did enrich.  
A vast and infinite capacity  
Did make my bosom like the Deity,  
In whose Mysterious and Celestial Mind  
All Ages and all Worlds together shin'd ;  
Who tho' He nothing said did always reign,  
And in Himself Eternity contain.  
The World was more in me, than I in it.  
The King of Glory in my soul did sit.

And to Himself in me he always gave  
All that He takes delight to see me have.  
For so my Spirit was an Endless Sphere,  
Like God Himself, and Heaven and Earth was there.

## MY SPIRIT

### I

My naked simple Life was I ;  
That Act so strongly shin'd  
Upon the Earth, the Sea, the Sky,  
It was the substance of my Mind ;  
The sense itself was I.  
I felt no dross nor matter in my Soul,  
No brims nor borders, such as in a bowl  
We see. My Essence was Capacity,  
That felt all things ;  
The thought that springs  
Therefrom's itself. It hath no other wings  
To spread abroad, nor eyes to see,  
Nor hands distinct to feel,  
Nor knees to kneel ;  
But being simple like the Deity  
In its own centre is a Sphere  
Not shut up here, but everywhere.

## II

It acts not from a centre to  
Its object as remote,  
But present is when it doth view,  
Being with the Being it doth note  
Whatever it doth do.  
It doth not by another engine work,  
But by itself ; which in the Act doth lurk.  
Its Essence is transformed into a true  
And perfect Act.  
And so exact  
Hath God appeared in this Mysterious fact,  
That 'tis all Eye, all Act, all Sight,  
And what it please can be,  
Not only see,  
Or do ; for 'tis more voluble than Light,  
Which can put on ten thousand forms,  
Being cloth'd with what itself adorns.

## III

This made me present evermore  
With whatsoe'er I saw.  
An object, if it were before  
My eye, was by Dame Nature's Law,  
Within my Soul. Her store  
Was all at once within me ; all Her treasures  
Were my immediate and internal pleasures,  
Substantial joys, which did inform my Mind.

With all She wrought  
My Soul was fraught,  
And every object in my Heart a Thought  
Begot, or was ; I could not tell,  
Whether the things did there  
Themselves appear,  
Which in my Spirit *truly* seem'd to dwell ;  
Or whether my conforming Mind  
Were not even all that therein shin'd.

#### IV

But yet of this I was most sure,  
That at the utmost length,  
(So worthy was it to endure)  
My Soul could best express its Strength.  
It was so quick and pure,  
That all my Mind was wholly everywhere,  
Whate'er it saw, 'twas ever wholly there ;  
The Sun ten thousand legions off, was nigh :  
The utmost star,  
Though seen from far,  
Was present in the apple of my Eye.  
There was my sight, my life, my sense,  
My substance, and my mind ;  
My Spirit shin'd  
Even there, not by a transient Influence :  
The Act was immanent, yet there :  
The Thing remote, yet felt even here.



## V

O Joy ! O Wonder and Delight !  
     O Sacred Mystery !  
 My Soul a Spirit infinite !  
 An Image of the Deity !  
     A pure substantial Light !  
 That Being Greatest which doth nothing seem !  
 Why, 'twas my all, I nothing did esteem  
 But that alone. A strange mysterious Sphere !  
     A deep Abyss  
     That sees and is  
 The only proper place of Heavenly Bliss.  
     To its Creator 'tis so near  
     In Love and Excellence,  
     In Life and Sense,  
 In Greatness, Worth, and Nature ; And so  
     dear,  
 In it, without hyperbole,  
 The Son and friend of God we see.

## VI

A strange extended Orb of Joy,  
     Proceeding from within,  
 Which did on every side, convey  
 Itself, and being nigh of kin  
     To God did every way  
 Dilate itself even in an instant, and  
 Like an indivisible Centre stand,  
 At once surrounding all Eternity.

'Twas not a sphere,  
Yet did appear,  
One Infinite. 'Twas somewhat every where,  
And tho' it had a power to see  
Far more, yet still it shin'd  
And was a Mind  
Exerted, for it saw Infinity.  
'Twas not a Sphere, but 'twas a Might  
Invisible, and yet gave Light.

## VII

O Wondrous Self ! O Sphere of Light,  
O Sphere of Joy most fair ;  
O Act, O Power infinite ;  
O Subtile and unbounded Air !  
O living Orb of Sight !  
Thou which within me art, yet me ! Thou Eye,  
And Temple of His whole Infinity !  
O what a World art Thou ! A World within !  
All Things appear  
All Objects are  
Alive in Thee ! Supersubstantial, Rare,  
Above themselves, and nigh of kin  
To those pure things we find  
In His great Mind  
Who made the World ! Tho' now eclipsed by sin  
There they are useful and Divine,  
Exalted there they ought to shine.

## THE APPREHENSION

If this I did not every moment see,  
    And if my thoughts did stray  
At any time, or idly play,  
And fix on other objects, yet  
    This Apprehension set  
        In me  
Was all my whole felicity.

## FULLNESS

That Light, that Sight, that Thought,  
Which in my Soul at first He wrought,  
Is sure the only Act to which I may

Assent to-day :

The mirror of an Endless Life,  
The shadow of a Virgin Wife,  
A Spiritual World standing within  
An Universe enclosed in skin ;  
My Power exerted, or my perfect Being,  
If not enjoying, yet an Act of Seeing.

My Bliss

Consists in this,

My Duty too

In this I view.

It is a fountain or a spring,  
Refreshing me in everything,  
From whence those living streams I do derive,  
By which my thirsty Soul is kept alive.

The Centre and the Sphere

Of my Delights are here.

It is my David's tower  
Where all my Armour lies,  
The fountain of my Power,  
My bliss, my sacrifice :  
    A little spark  
    That shining in the dark,  
Makes and encourages my Soul to rise ;  
    The root of Hope, the golden chain,  
    Whose end is, as the poets feign,  
    Fastened to the very throne  
        Of Jove.  
It is a stone,  
On which I sit,  
An endless benefit,  
That being made my Regal Throne,  
    Doth prove  
An Oracle of His Eternal Love.

## NATURE

That Custom is a second Nature, we  
Most plainly find by Nature's purity ;  
For Nature teacheth nothing but the Truth.  
I'm sure that mine did in my virgin youth :  
The very Day my Spirit did inspire,  
The World's fair Beauty set my soul on fire.  
My Senses were informers to my Heart,  
The conduits of His Glory, Power, and Art.  
His Greatness, Wisdom, Goodness, I did see,  
His Glorious Love, and His Eternity,  
Almost as soon as born ; and every sense  
Was in me like to some Intelligence.  
I was by nature prone and apt to love  
All Light and Beauty, both in Heaven above  
And Earth beneath, prone even to admire,  
Adore and praise as well as to Desire.  
My Inclinations rais'd me up on high,  
And guided me to all Infinity.  
A secret self I had enclos'd within,  
That was not bounded with my clothes or skin,

Or terminated with my Sight, the Sphere  
Of which was bounded with the Heavens here :  
But that did rather, like the subtile Light,  
Secur'd from rough and raging storms by night,  
Break through the Lanthorn's sides, and freely ray  
Dispersing and dilating every way :  
Whose steady beams too subtile for the wind,  
Are such that we their bounds can scarcely find.  
It did encompass, and possess rare Things,  
But yet felt more, and on its Angel's Wings  
Pierc'd through the skies immediately, and sought  
For all that could beyond all Worlds be thought.  
It did not move, nor one way go, but stood,  
And by dilating of itself, all Good  
It strove to see, as if 'twere present there,  
Even while it present stood conversing here ;  
And more suggested than I could discern,  
Or ever since by any means could learn.  
Vast, unaffected wonderful Desires,  
Like inward, native, uncaus'd, hidden fires,  
Sprang up with expectations very strange,  
Which into new desires did quickly change ;  
For all I saw beyond the azure round,  
Was endless darkness with no beauty crown'd.  
Why Beauty should not there, as well as here,  
Why Goodness should not likewise there appear,  
Why Treasures and Delights should bounded be,  
Since there is such a wide Infinity—  
These were the doubts and troubles of my Soul,  
By which I do perceive without control

A world of endless joys by Nature made,  
That needs must flourish ever, never fade.  
A wide, magnificent and spacious sky,  
So rich 'tis worthy of the Deity,  
Clouds here and there like Winged Charets flying,  
Flowers ever flourishing, yet always dying,  
A Day of Glory where I all things see,  
As 'twere enrich'd with Beams of Light for me,  
And drown'd in glorious rays of purer Light,  
Succeeded with a black yet glorious night,  
Stars sweetly shedding to my pleased sense,  
On all things their nocturnal influence,  
With Secret Rooms in Times and Ages more  
Past and to come enlarging my great store ;  
These all in order present unto me  
My happy eyes did in a moment see,  
With wonders there-too, to my Soul unknown,  
Till they by men and reading first were shewn.  
All which were made that I might ever be  
With some great Workman, some great Deity.  
But yet there were new Rooms and Spaces more,  
Beyond all these, new regions o'er and o'er,  
Into all which my pent-up Soul like fire  
Did break, surmounting all I here admire.  
The spaces fill'd were like a Cabinet  
Of Joys before me most distinctly set :  
The empty like to large and vacant room  
For Fancy to enlarge in, and presume  
A space for more, remov'd, but yet adorning  
Those near at hand, that pleased me every morning.



Here I was seated to behold new things,  
In the fair fabrick of the King of Kings.  
All, all was mine. The fountain, tho' not known,  
Yet that there must be one was plainly shewn,  
Which fountain of Delights must needs be Love,  
As all the Goodness of the things did prove.  
It shines upon me from the highest skies,  
And all its Creatures for my sake doth prize,  
Of whose enjoyment I am made the End,  
While how the same is so I comprehend.

# EASE

## I

How easily doth Nature teach the soul,  
How irresistible is her Infusion !  
There's nothing found that can her force control  
But Sin. How weak and feeble's all delusion !

## II

Things false are forc'd and most elaborate,  
Things pure and true are obvious unto sense ;  
The first impressions in our earthly state  
Are made by things most great in excellence.

## III

How easy is it to believe the sky  
Is wide and great and fair ! How soon may we  
Be made to know the Sun is bright and high,  
And very glorious, when its beams we see ;

## IV

That all the Earth is one continued globe,  
And that all men therein are living treasures ;

That fields and meadows are a glorious robe  
Adorning it with smooth and heavenly pleasures ;

## V

That all we see is ours, and every one  
Possessor of the whole ; that every man  
Is like a God Incarnate on the Throne,  
Even like the first for whom the world began ;

## VI

Whom all are taught to honour, serve, and love,  
Because he is belov'd of God unknown,  
And therefore is on Earth itself above  
All others that His Wisdom might be shewn ;

## VII

That all may happy be, each one most blest,  
Both in himself and others ; all most High,  
While all by each, and each by all possest,  
Are intermutual joys beneath the sky.

## VIII

This shows a wise contrivance, and discovers  
Some great Creator sitting on the Throne,  
That so disposeth things for all His lovers,  
That every one might reign like God alone.

# SPEED

## I

The liquid pearl in springs,  
The useful and the precious things  
Are in a moment known.  
Their very glory does reveal their worth,  
(And that doth set their glory forth ; )  
As soon as I was born they all were shewn.

## II

True living wealth did flow  
In crystal streams below  
My feet, and trilling down  
In pure, transparent, soft, sweet, melting pleasures,  
Like precious and diffusive treasures,  
At once my body fed, and soul did crown.

## III

I was as high and great  
As Kings are in their seat.

All other things were mine :  
The world my house, the creatures were my goods,  
Fields, Mountains, Valleys, Woods,  
Men and their arts to make me rich combine.

#### IV

Great, Lofty, Endless, Stable,  
Various and Innumerable,  
Bright, useful, fair, Divine,  
Immovable and sweet the treasures were ;  
The Sacred Objects did appear  
More rich and beautiful, as well as mine.

#### V

New all ! new-burnisht joys ;  
Tho' now by other toys  
Eclipt : new all and mine.  
Great Truth so Sacred seem'd for this to me,  
Because the things which I did see  
Were such, my state I knew to be divine.

#### VI

Nor did the Angels' faces,  
The Glories and the Graces,  
The Beauty, Peace and Joy  
Of Heaven itself, more sweetness yield to me.  
Till filthy Sin did all destroy,  
These were the offspring of the Deity.

## THE CHOICE

### I

When first Eternity stoop'd down to nought,  
And in the Earth its likeness sought,  
When first it out of nothing fram'd the skies,  
And form'd the Moon and Sun  
That we might see what it had done,  
It was so wise,  
That it did prize  
Things truly Greatest, Brightest, Fairest, Best,  
All which it made, and left the rest.

### II

Then did it take such care about the Truth,  
Its daughter, that even in her youth,  
Her face might shine upon us, and be known ;  
That by a better fate,  
It other toys might antedate  
As soon as shewn,  
And be our own,

While we were hers ; and that a virgin Love  
Her best inheritance might prove.

### III

Thoughts undefiled, simple, naked, pure,  
Thoughts worthy ever to endure,  
Our first and disengaged thoughts it loves,  
And therefore made the Truth,  
In Infancy and tender youth  
So obvious to  
Our easy view  
That it doth prepossess our Soul, and proves  
The Cause of what it all ways moves.

### IV

By merit and desire it doth allure ;  
For Truth is so divine and pure,  
So rich and acceptable, being seen,  
(Not parted, but in whole)  
That it doth draw and force the Soul,  
As the Great Queen  
Of Bliss, between  
Whom and the Soul, no one Pretender ought  
Thrust in to captivate a Thought.

### V

Hence did Eternity contrive to make  
The Truth so fair for all our sake

That being Truth, and fair and easy too,  
While it on all doth shine,  
We might by it become Divine,  
Being led to Woo  
The Thing we view,  
And as chaste virgins early with it join,  
That with it we might likewise shine.

## VI

Eternity doth give the richest things  
To every man, and makes all Kings.  
The best and richest things it doth convey  
To all and every one :  
It raised me unto a throne !  
Which I enjoy,  
In such a way,  
That Truth her daughter is my chiefest Bride,  
Her daughter Truth's my chiefest pride.

## VII

All mine ! And seen so easily ! How great, how blest !  
How soon am I of all possest !  
My Infancy no sooner opes its eyes,  
But straight the spacious Earth  
Abounds with Joy, Peace, Glory, Mirth,  
And being wise  
The very skies,  
And stars do mine become ; being all possest  
Even in that way that is the best.



## THE PERSON

### I

Ye Sacred Limbs,  
A richer blazon I will lay  
On you than first I found :  
That like Celestial Kings,  
Ye might with ornaments of Joy  
Be always crown'd.  
A deep vermilion on a red,  
On that a scarlet I will lay,  
With gold I'll crown your Head,  
Which like the Sun shall ray.  
With robes of Glory and Delight  
I'll make you bright.  
Mistake me not, I do not mean to bring  
New robes, but to display the Thing :  
Nor paint, nor clothe, nor crown, nor add a  
ray,  
But Glorify by taking all away.

## II

The Naked Things  
Are most sublime, and brightest show,  
When they alone are seen :  
Men's Hands than Angels' Wings  
Are truer wealth even here below :  
For those but seem.  
Their worth they then do best reveal,  
When we all metaphors remove,  
For metaphors conceal,  
And only vapours prove.  
They best are blazon'd when we see  
The Anatomy,  
Survey the skin, cut up the flesh, the veins  
Unfold : The Glory there remains ;  
The muscles, fibres, arteries, and bones  
Are better far than Crowns and precious stones.

## III

Shall I not then  
Delight in those most sacred Treasures  
Which my Great Father gave,  
Far more than other men  
Delight in Gold ? Since these are Pleasures  
That make us brave !  
Far braver than the pearl and gold  
That glitter on a lady's neck !  
The rubies we behold,  
The diamonds that deck

The Hands of Queens, compar'd unto  
The Hands we view ;  
The softer Lilies and the Roses are  
Less ornaments to those that wear  
The same, than are the Hands, and Lips and Eyes  
Of those who those false ornaments so prize.

#### IV

Let verity  
Be thy delight ; let me esteem  
True Wealth far more than Toys :  
Let Sacred Riches be,  
While falser Treasures only seem,  
My real Joys.  
For golden chains and bracelets are  
But gilded manacles, whereby  
Old Satan doth ensnare,  
Allure, bewitch the eye.  
Thy Gifts, O God, alone I'll prize,  
My tongue, my eyes,  
My cheeks, my lips, my ears, my hands, my feet ;  
Their harmony is far more sweet,  
Their beauty true. And these in all my ways  
Shall themes become and organs of Thy praise.

## THE ESTATE

### I

But shall my Soul no wealth possess,  
No outward riches have?  
Shall hands and eyes alone express  
Thy Bounty, which the grave  
Shall strait devour? Shall I become  
Within myself a living tomb  
Of useless wonders? Shall the fair and brave  
And great endowments of my Soul lie waste,  
Which ought to be a fountain, and a womb  
Of Praises unto Thee?  
Shall there no outward objects be,  
For these to see and taste?  
Not so, my God, for outward joys and pleasures  
Are even the Things for which my Limbs are  
treasures.

## II

My palate is a touch-stone fit  
To taste how good Thou art,  
And other members second it  
Thy praises to impart.  
There's not an eye that's fram'd by Thee  
But ought Thy Life and Love to see :  
Nor is there, Lord, upon mine head an ear  
But that the music of Thy works should hear.  
Each toe, each finger, framed by Thy skill,  
Ought ointments to distill ;  
Ambrosia, Nectar, Wine should flow  
From every joint I owe,  
Or things more rich ; while they Thy Holy Will  
Are instruments adapted to fulfill.

## III

They ought, my God, to be the pipes  
And conduits of Thy praise.  
Men's bodies were not made for stripes,  
Nor anything but Joys.  
They were not made to be alone :  
But made to be the very Throne  
Of Blessedness, to be like Suns, whose rays,  
Dispersed, scatter many thousand ways.  
They drink in nectars, and disburse again  
In purer beams, those streams,  
Those nectars which are caus'd by Joys ;

And as the spacious Main  
Doth all the rivers, which it drinks, return,  
Thy love receiv'd doth make the soul to burn.

#### IV

Elixirs richer are than dross,  
And ends are more divine  
Than are the means ; But dung and loss  
Materials (tho' they shine  
Like gold and silver) are, compared  
To what Thy Spirit doth regard,  
Thy will require, Thy love embrace, Thy mind  
Esteem, Thy nature most illustrious find.  
These are the things wherewith we God reward.  
Our love He more doth prize:  
Our gratitude is in His eyes  
Far richer than the skies ;  
And those affections which we do return,  
Are like the Love which in Himself doth burn.

#### V

We plough the very skies, as well  
As earth, the spacious seas  
Are ours ; the stars all gems excel.  
The air was made to please  
The souls of men : Devouring fire  
Doth feed and quicken Man's Desire.  
The Orb of Light in its wide circuit moves,

Corn for our food springs out of very mire,  
Our fuel grows in woods and groves ;  
    Choice herbs and flowers aspire  
    To kiss our feet ; Beasts court our loves.\*  
    How glorious is man's fate !  
The laws of God, the Works He did create,  
His ancient ways, are His and my Estate.

These five lines have an alternative reading :

    The Sun itself doth in its glory shine,  
    And gold and silver out of very mire,  
And pearls and rubies out of earth refine ;  
    While herbs and flowers aspire  
    To touch and make our feet divine.

## THE ENQUIRY

### I

Men may delighted be with springs,  
While trees and herbs their senses please,  
And taste even living nectar in the seas :  
    May think their members things  
Of earthly worth at least, if not Divine,  
And sing because the earth for them doth shine :

### II

But can the Angels take delight,  
To see such faces here beneath ?  
Or can perfumes indeed from dung-hills breathe ?  
    Or is the world a sight  
Worthy of them ? Then may we mortals be  
Surrounded with Eternal Clarity.



### III

Even holy angels may come down  
To walk on Earth, and see delights,  
That feed and please, even here, their appetites.

Our joys may make a crown  
For them. And in His Tabernacle men may be  
Like palms we mingled with the Cherubs see.

### IV

Men's senses are indeed the Gems,  
Their praises the most sweet perfumes,  
Their eyes the Thrones, their hearts the Heavenly Rooms,  
Their Souls the Diadems,  
Their tongues the Organs which they love to hear,  
Their cheeks and faces like to theirs appear.

### V

The wonders which our God hath done,  
The glories of His attributes,  
Like dangling apples or like golden fruits,  
Angelic joys become.  
His wisdom shines on Earth ; His love doth flow,  
Like myrrh or incense, even here below.

## VI

And shall not we such joys possess,  
Which God for man did chiefly make ?  
The Angels have them only for our sake !  
And yet they all confess  
His glory here on Earth to be Divine,  
And that His Godhead in His works doth shine.

## THE CIRCULATION

### I

As fair ideas from the sky,  
Or images of things,  
Unto a spotless mirror fly,  
On unperceived wings,  
And lodging there affect the sense,  
As if at first they came from thence ;  
While being there, they richly beautify  
The place they fill, and yet communicate  
Themselves, reflecting to the seer's eye,  
Just such is our estate.  
No praise can we return again,  
No glory in ourselves possess,  
But what derived from without we gain,  
From all the mysteries of blessedness.

### II

No man breathes out more vital air  
Than he before sucked in.

Those joys and praises must repair  
To us, which 'tis a sin  
To bury in a senseless tomb.  
An earthly wight must be the Heir  
Of all those joys the Holy Angels prize,  
He must a King before a Priest become,  
And gifts receive or ever sacrifice.  
*'Tis blindness makes us Dumb.*  
Had we but those celestial eyes,  
Whereby we could behold the sum  
Of all His bounties, *we should overflow*  
*With praises did we but their Causes know.*

### III

All things to Circulations owe  
Themselves; by which alone  
They do exist ; They cannot shew  
A sigh, a word, a groan,  
A colour or a glimpse of Light,  
The sparkle of a precious stone,  
A virtue, or a Smell, a lovely sight,  
A fruit, a beam, an influence, a tear,  
But they another's livery must wear,  
And borrow matter first,  
Before they can communicate.  
Whatever's empty is accurst :  
And this doth shew that we must some estate  
Possess, or never can communicate.

A sponge drinks in the water, which  
 Is afterwards *expressed*.  
 A liberal hand must first be rich :  
 Who blesseth must be blest.  
 The thirsty earth drinks in the rain,  
 The trees suck moisture at their roots,  
 Before the one can lavish herbs again,  
 Before the other can afford us fruits.  
 No tenant can raise corn or pay his rent,  
 Nor can even have a Lord,  
 That has no land. No spring can vent,  
 No vessel any wine afford  
 Wherein no liquor's put. No empty purse,  
 Can pounds or talents of itself disburse.

V

Flame that ejects its golden beams,  
 Sups up the grosser air ;  
 To seas, that pour out their streams  
 In springs, those streams repair ;  
 Receiv'd ideas make even dreams.  
 No fancy painteth foul or fair  
 But by the ministry of inward light,  
 That in the spirit cherisheth its sight.  
 The Moon returneth light, and some men say  
 The very Sun no ray

Nor influence could have, did it  
No foreign aids, no food admit.  
The Earth no exhalations would afford,  
Were not its spirits by the Sun restored.

## VI

All things do first receive, that give.  
Only 'tis God above,  
That from and in Himself doth live ;  
Whose all-sufficient love  
Without original can flow  
And all the joys and glories shew  
Which mortal man can take delight to know.  
He is the primitive eternal spring  
The endless ocean of each glorious thing.  
The Soul a vessel is,  
A spacious bosom to contain  
All the fair treasures of His bliss,  
Which run like Rivers from, into the main,  
And all it doth receive returns again.

## AMENDMENT

### I

That all things should be mine,  
This makes His bounty most Divine.  
But that they all more rich should be,  
And far more brightly shine,  
As used by me ;  
It ravisheth my Soul to see the End,  
To which this work so wonderful doth tend.

### II

That we should make the skies  
More glorious far before Thine eyes  
Than Thou didst make them, and even Thee  
Far more Thy works to prize,  
As used they be  
Than as they're made, is a stupendous work,  
Wherein Thy wisdom mightily doth lurk.

### III

Thy greatness, and Thy love,  
Thy power, in this, my joy doth move;  
Thy goodness, and felicity,  
In this exprest above  
All praise I see :  
While Thy great Godhead over all doth reign  
And such an End in such a sort attain.

### IV

What bound may we assign  
O God to any work of Thine !  
Their endlessness discovers Thee  
In all to be Divine;  
A Deity,  
That will for evermore exceed the End  
Of all that creature's wit can comprehend.

### V

Am I a glorious spring  
Of joys and riches to my King ?  
Are men made Gods ? And may they see  
So wonderful a thing  
As God in me ?  
And is my Soul a mirror that must shine  
Even like the Sun and be far more divine ?



## VI

Thy Soul, O God, doth prize  
The seas, the earth, our souls, the skies;  
As we return the same to Thee,  
    They more delight thine eyes,  
    And sweeter be  
As unto Thee we offer up the same,  
Than as to us from Thee at first they came.

## VII

O how doth Sacred Love  
His gifts refine, exalt, improve !  
Our love to creatures makes them be  
    In Thine esteem above  
    Themselves to Thee !  
O here His goodness evermore admire  
He made our Souls to make His creatures higher.

# THE DEMONSTRATION

## I

The highest things are easiest to be shewn,  
And only capable of being *known*.

A mist involves the eye  
While in the middle it doth live ;  
And till the ends of things are seen  
The way's uncertain that doth stand between.  
As in the air we see the clouds  
Like winding sheets or shrouds,  
Which though they nearer are obscure  
The sun, which higher far, is far more pure.

## II

Its very brightness makes it near the eye,  
Tho' many thousand leagues beyond the sky.  
Its beams by violence  
Invade, and ravish distant sense.

Only extremes and heights are known,  
No certainty where no perfection's shewn.  
Extremities of blessedness  
Compel us to confess  
A God indeed, Whose excellence,  
In all His works must needs exceed all sense.

### III

And for this cause, incredibles alone  
May be by demonstration to us shewn.  
Those things that are most bright  
Sun-like appear in their own light,  
And nothing's truly seen that's mean :  
Be it a sand, an acorn, or a bean,  
It must be cloth'd with endless glory,  
Before its perfect story  
(Be the spirit ne'er so clear)  
Can in its causes and its ends appear.

### IV

What can be more incredible than this,  
Where may we find a more profound abyss ?  
What Heavenly height can be  
Transcendent to this Summity !  
What more desirable object can  
Be offered to the soul of hungering man !  
His gifts as they to us come down  
Are infinite and crown

The soul with strange fruitions ; yet  
Returning from us they more value get.

## V

And what than this can be more plain and  
clear ?

What truth than this more evident appear !

The Godhead cannot prize  
The Sun at all, nor yet the skies,  
Or air, or earth, or trees, or seas,  
Or stars, unless the Soul of man they please.  
He neither sees with human eyes  
Nor needs Himself seas, skies,  
Or earth, or any thing : He draws  
No breath, nor eats or drinks by Nature's laws.

## VI

The joy and pleasure which His soul doth  
take

In all His works is for His creatures' sake.

So great a certainty  
We in this Holy Doctrine see  
That there could be no worth at all  
In anything material, great, or small,  
Were not some creature more alive  
Whence it might worth derive.

God is the spring whence things come forth  
Souls are the fountains of their real worth.

## VII

The joy and pleasure which His soul doth take  
In all His works is for His creatures' sake.

Yet doth He take delight  
That's altogether infinite  
In them even as they from Him come,  
For such His love and goodness is, the sum  
Of all His happiness doth seem,  
At least in His esteem,  
In that delight and joy to lie  
Which is His blessed creatures' melody.

## VIII

In them He sees, and feels, and smells, and lives,  
In them affected is to whom He gives;  
In them ten thousand ways,  
He all His work again enjoys  
All things from Him to Him proceed  
By them ; are His in them : as if indeed  
His Godhead did itself exceed.  
To them He all conveys ;  
Nay, even Himself ! He is the End  
To whom in them Himself, and all things tend.

# THE ANTICIPATION

## I

My contemplation dazzles in the End  
Of all I comprehend,  
And soars above all heights,  
Diving into the depths of all delights.  
Can He become the End,  
To whom all creatures tend,  
Who is the Father of all Infinites ?  
Then may He benefit receive from things,  
And be *not Parent only* of all Springs.

## II

The End doth want the means, and is the cause,  
Whose sake, by Nature's laws,  
Is that for which they are.  
Such sands, such dangerous rocks we must beware :  
From all Eternity  
A perfect Deity

Most great and blessed He doth still appear ;  
His essence perfect was in all its features,  
He ever blessed in His joys and creatures.

### III

From everlasting He those joys did need,  
And all those joys proceed  
From Him eternally.  
From everlasting His felicity  
Complete and perfect was,  
Whose bosom is the glass,  
Wherein we all things everlasting see.  
His name is Now, His Nature is Forever :  
None can His creatures from their Maker sever.

### IV

The End in Him from Everlasting is  
The fountain of all Bliss :  
From Everlasting it  
Efficient was, and Influence did emit,  
That caused all. Before  
The world, we do adore  
This glorious End. Because all benefit  
From it proceeds: Both are the very  
same,  
The End and Fountain differ but in Name.

## V

That so the End should be the very Spring  
Of every glorious thing ;  
And that which seemeth last,  
The fountain and the cause ; attained so fast  
That it was first ; and mov'd  
The Efficient, who so lov'd  
All Worlds and made them for the sake of this ;  
It shews the End complete before, and is  
A perfect Token of His perfect Bliss.

## VI

The End complete, the means must needs be so,  
By which we plainly know,  
From all Eternity  
The means whereby God is, must perfect be.  
God is Himself the means  
Whereby He doth exist :  
And as the Sun by shining 's cloth'd with beams,  
So from Himself to all His glory streams,  
Who is a Sun, yet what Himself doth list.

## VII

His endless wants and His enjoyments be  
From all Eternity  
Immutable in Him :  
They are His joys before the Cherubim.



His wants appreciate all,  
And being infinite,  
Permit no Being to be mean or small,  
That He enjoys, or is before His sight.  
His satisfactions do His wants delight.

### VIII

Wants are the fountains of Felicity ;  
No joy could ever be  
Were there no want. No bliss,  
No sweetness perfect, were it not for this.  
Want is the greatest pleasure  
Because it makes all treasure.  
O what a wonderful profound abyss  
Is God ! In whom eternal wants and treasures  
Are more delightful since they both are pleasures.

### IX

He infinitely wanteth all His joys ;  
(No want the Soul e'er cloy.)  
And all those wanted pleasures  
He infinitely hath. What endless measures,  
What heights and depths may we  
In His felicity  
Conceive ! Whose very wants are endless pleasures.  
His life in wants and joys is infinite,  
And both are felt as His Supreme Delight.

## X.

He's not like us ; possession doth not cloy,  
Nor sense of want destroy ;  
Both always are together ;  
No force can either from the other sever.  
Yet there's a space between  
That's endless. Both are seen  
Distinctly still, and both are seen for ever.  
As soon as e'er He wanteth all His bliss,  
His bliss, tho' everlasting, in Him is.

## XI

His Essence is all Act : He did that He  
All Act might always be.  
His nature burns like fire ;  
His goodness infinitely does desire  
To be by all possesst ;  
His love makes others blest.  
It is the glory of His high estate,  
And that which I for evermore admire,  
He is an Act that doth communicate.

## XII

From all to all Eternity He is  
That Act : an Act of bliss :  
Wherein all bliss to all  
That will receive the same, or on Him call,

Is freely given : from whence  
'Tis easy even to sense  
To apprehend that all Receivers are  
In Him, all gifts, all joys, all eyes, even all  
At once, that ever will or shall appear.

### XIII

He is the means of them, they not of Him.  
The Holy Cherubim,  
Souls, Angels from Him came  
Who is a glorious bright and living Flame,  
That on all things doth shine,  
And makes their face divine.  
And Holy, Holy, Holy is His Name ;  
He is the means both of Himself and all,  
Whom we the Fountain Means and End do call.

## THE RECOVERY

### I

To see us but receive, is such a sight  
As makes His treasures infinite !  
Because His goodness doth possess  
In us, His own, and our own Blessedness.  
Yea more, His love doth take delight  
To make our glory infinite;  
Our blessedness to see  
Is even to the Deity  
A Beatific vision ! He attains  
His Ends while we enjoy. In us He reigns.

### II

For God enjoy'd is all His End.  
Himself He then doth comprehend.  
When He is blessed, magnified,  
Extoll'd, exalted, prais'd and glorified,  
Honor'd, esteem'd, belov'd, enjoy'd,

Admired, sanctified, obeyed,  
That is received. For He  
Doth place His whole Felicity  
In that : who is despised and defied,  
Undeified almost if once denied.

### III

In all His works, in all His ways,  
We must His glory see and praise ;  
And since our pleasure is the end,  
We must His Goodness, and His Love attend.  
If we despise His glorious works,  
Such sin and mischief in it lurks  
That they are all made vain ;  
And this is even endless pain  
To Him that sees it. Whose diviner grief  
Is hereupon (Ah me !) without relief.

### IV

We please His goodness that receive :  
Refusers Him of all bereave.  
As bridegrooms know full well that  
build  
A Palace for their Bride. It will not yield  
Any delight to him at all  
If she for whom he made the hall  
Refuse to dwell in it,  
Or plainly scorn the benefit.

Her Act that's woo'd yields more delight and  
pleasure  
If she receives, than all the pile of treasure.

V

But we have hands, and lips, and eyes,  
And hearts and souls can sacrifice ;  
And Souls themselves are made in vain  
If we our evil stubbornness retain.  
Affections, praises, are the things  
For which He gave us all those springs ;  
They are the very fruits  
Of all those trees and roots,  
The fruits and ends of all His great en-  
deavours,  
Which He abolisheth whoever severs.

VI

'Tis not alone a lively sense,  
A clear and quick intelligence,  
A free, profound, and full esteem ;  
Tho' these elixirs all and ends do seem :  
But gratitude, thanksgiving, praise,  
A heart returned for all those joys,  
These are the things admired,  
These are the things by Him desired :  
These are the nectar and the quintessence,  
The cream and flower that most affect His sense.

## VII

The voluntary act whereby  
These are repaid, is in His eye  
More precious than the very sky.  
All gold and silver is but empty dross,  
Rubies and Sapphires are but loss,  
The very Sun, and Stars and Seas  
Far less His spirit please.  
One voluntary act of Love  
Far more delightful to His soul doth prove,  
And is above all these as far as Love.

## ANOTHER

### I

He seeks for ours as we do seek for His;  
Nay, O my Soul, ours is far more His bliss  
Than His is ours ; at least it so doth seem  
Both in His own and our esteem :

### II

His earnest love, His infinite desires,  
His living, endless, and devouring fires,  
Do rage in thirst and fervently require  
A Love 'tis strange it should desire.

### III

We cold and careless are, and scarcely think  
Upon the glorious spring whereat we drink.  
Did He not love us we could be content :  
We wretches are indifferent !



#### IV

He courts our love with infinite esteem,  
And seeks it so that it doth almost seem  
Even all His blessedness. His love doth prize  
It as the only Sacrifice.

#### V

'Tis death my Soul to be indifferent,  
Set forth thyself unto thy whole extent,  
And all the glory of His passion prize,  
Who for thee lives, who for thee dies.

#### VI

His goodness made thy love so great a pleasure,  
His goodness made thy Soul so great a treasure  
To Thee and Him : that thou mightst both inherit,  
Prize it according to its merit.

#### VII

There is no goodness nor desert in thee,  
For which thy love so coveted should be ;  
His goodness is the fountain of thy worth,—  
O live to love and set it forth.

### VIII

Thou nothing giv'st to Him, He gave all things,  
To thee, and made thee like the King of Kings.  
His love the fountain is of Heaven and Earth,  
The cause of all thy joy and mirth.

### IX

Thy love is nothing but itself, and yet  
So infinite is His that He doth set  
A value infinite upon it. Oh !  
This, canst thou careless be, and know !

### X

Let that same Goodness, which being infinite,  
Esteems thy Love with infinite delight,  
Tho' less than His, tho' nothing, always be  
An object infinite to thee.

### XI

And as it is the cause of all esteem,  
Of all the worth which in thy love doth seem,  
So let it be the cause of all thy pleasure,  
Causing its being and its treasure.

# LOVE

## I

O nectar ! O delicious stream !  
O ravishing and only pleasure ! Where  
    Shall such another theme  
Inspire my tongue with joys or please mine ear !  
    Abridgement of Delights !  
    And Queen of Sights !  
O Mine of Rarities ! O Kingdom Wide !  
O more ! O cause of all ! O glorious Bride !  
    O God ! O Bride of God ! O King !  
    O Soul and Crown of everything !

## II

Did not I covet to behold  
Some endless Monarch, that did always live  
    In Palaces of Gold  
Willing all Kingdoms, Realms, and Crowns to give  
    Unto my Soul ! Whose love  
    A spring might prove

Of endless Glories, Honours, Friendships, Pleasures,  
Joys, Praises, Beauties and Celestial Treasures !

Lo, now I see there's such a King,  
The fountain head of everything !

### III

Did my Ambition ever dream  
Of such a Lord, of such a Love ! Did I  
Expect so sweet a stream  
As this at any time ! Could any eye  
Believe it ? Why all Power  
Is used here,  
Joys down from Heaven on my head do shower,  
And Jove beyond the fiction doth appear  
Once more in golden rain to come  
To Danæ's pleasing fruitful womb.

### IV

His Ganymede ! His Life ! His Joy !  
Or He comes down to me, or takes me up  
That I might be His boy,  
And fill, and taste, and give, and drink the Cup.  
But those (tho' great) are all  
Too short and small,  
Too weak and feeble pictures to express  
The true mysterious depths of Blessedness.  
I am His Image, and His friend,  
His Son, Bride, Glory, Temple, End.

## THOUGHTS I

### I

Ye brisk, divine and living things,  
Ye great exemplars, and ye heavenly springs,  
Which I within me see ;  
Ye machines great,  
Which in my spirit God did seat,  
Ye engines of Felicity ;  
Ye wondrous fabrics of His hands,  
Who all possesseth that He understands ;  
That ye are pent within my breast,  
Yet rove at large from East to West,  
And are Invisible, yet Infinite,  
Is my transcendent and my best delight.

### II

By you I do the joys possess  
Of yesterday's-yet-present blessedness ;  
As in a mirror clear,  
Old objects I  
Far distant do even now descry,  
Which by your help are present here,

Ye are yourselves the very pleasures,  
The sweetest, last, and most substantial treasures :  
The offsprings and effects of bliss  
By whose return my glory is  
Renew'd and represented to my view :  
O ye delights, most pure, Divine, and true !

### III

Ye thoughts and apprehensions are  
The Heavenly streams which fill the Soul with rare  
Transcendent perfect pleasures.  
At any time  
As if ye still were in your prime,  
Ye open all His heavenly treasures.  
His joys accessible are found  
To you, and those things enter which surround  
The Soul. Ye living Things within !  
Where had all joy and glory been  
Had ye not made the Soul those things to know  
Which seated in it make the fairest shew ?

### IV

I know not by what secret power  
Ye flourish so : but ye within your bower  
More beautiful do seem,  
And better meat  
Ye daily yield my Soul to eat,  
Than even the objects I esteem

Without my Soul. What were the sky,  
What were the Sun, or Stars, did ye not lie  
In me, and represent them there  
Where else they never could appear !  
Yea what were bliss without such thoughts to me,  
What were my Life, what were the Deity ?

## V

O ye *Conceptions* of delight !  
Ye that inform my soul with life and light !  
Ye representatives, and springs  
Of inward pleasure !  
Ye joys, ye ends of outward treasure !  
Ye inward and ye living things !  
The thought or joy conceived is  
The inward fabric of my standing bliss :  
It is the very substance of my mind  
Transform'd and with its objects lined,  
The Quintessence, Elixir, Spirit, Cream :  
'Tis strange that things unseen should be supreme.

## VI

The eye's confined, the body's pent  
In narrow room : limbs are of small extent,  
But thoughts are always free ;  
And as they're best  
So can they even in the breast  
Rove o'er the world with liberty :

Can enter ages, present be  
In any kingdom, into bosoms see.  
Thoughts, thoughts can come to things and  
view  
What bodies can't approach unto.  
They know no bar, denial, limit, wall,  
But have a liberty to look on all.

## VII

Like bees they fly from flower to flower,  
Appear in every closet, temple, bower,  
And suck the sweet from thence  
No eye can see :  
As tasters to the Deity,  
Incredible their excellence,  
For evermore they will be seen  
Nor ever moulder into less esteem.  
They ever shew an equal face,  
And are immortal in their place:  
Ten thousand Ages hence they are as strong,  
Ten thousand Ages hence they are as young.



## THOUGHTS II

### I

A delicate and tender thought  
The Quintessence is found of all He wrought;  
It is the fruit of all His works,  
Which we conceive,  
Bring forth, and give,  
Yea and in which the greater value lurks.  
It is the fine and curious flower  
Which we return and offer every hour ;  
So tender is our Paradise  
That in a trice  
It withers strait and fades away  
If we but cease its beauty to display.

### II

Why things so precious should be made  
So prone, so easy, and so apt to fade  
It is not easy to declare;  
But God would have

His creatures brave,  
And that too by their own continual care.  
He gave them power every hour  
Both to erect and to maintain a Tower,  
Which he far more in us doth prize  
Than all the skies,  
That we might offer it to Him,  
And in our souls be like the Seraphim.

### III

That temple David did intend  
Was but a thought, and yet it did transcend  
King Solomon's. A Thought we know  
Is that for which  
God doth enrich  
With joys even Heaven above and Earth below.  
For that all objects might be seen  
He made the Orient Azure and the Green :  
That we might in his works delight  
And that the sight  
Of those His Treasures might enflame  
The Soul with Love to Him, He made the same

### IV

This sight which is the glorious End  
Of all His works and which doth comprehend  
Eternity and Time and Space,  
Is far more dear,

And far more near  
To Him, than all His glorious dwelling-place.  
It is a spiritual world within,  
A living world and nearer far of kin  
To God than that which first he made.  
While that doth fade  
This therefore ever shall endure  
Within the soul as more divine and pure.

## [THE INFLUX]

### I

Ye hidden nectars, which my God doth drink,  
Ye heavenly streams, ye beams divine,  
On which the angels think,  
How quick, how strongly do ye shine !  
Ye images of joy that in me dwell,  
Ye sweet mysterious shades  
That do all substances excel,  
Whose glory never fades ;  
Ye skies, ye seas, ye stars, or things more fair,  
O ever, ever unto me repair !

### II

Ye pleasant Thoughts ! O how that Sun Divine  
Appears to-day which I did see  
So sweetly then to shine  
Even in my very infancy !  
Ye rich ideas which within me live  
Ye living pictures here,

Ye spirits that do bring and give  
All joys ; when ye appear  
Even Heaven itself and God, and all in you  
Come down on Earth and please my blessed view.

### III

I never glorious great and rich am found,  
Am never ravished with joy,  
Till ye my soul surround,  
Till ye my blessedness display.  
No soul but stone, no man but clay am I,  
No flesh, but dust, till ye  
Delight, invade and move my eye,  
And do replenish me.  
My sweet informers and my living treasures,  
My great companions and my only pleasures !

### IV

O what incredible delights, what fires,  
What appetites, what joys do ye  
Occasion, what desires,  
What heavenly praises ! While we see  
What every Seraphim above admires !  
Your Jubilee and trade,  
Ye are so strangely and divinely made  
Shall never, never fade.  
Ye ravish all my soul : Of you I twice  
Will speak, for in the dark y'are Paradise.

### THOUGHTS III

Thoughts are the Angels which we send abroad,  
To visit all the parts of God's abode.  
Thoughts are the things wherein we all confess  
The quintessence of Sin and Holiness  
Is laid. All wisdom in a Thought doth shine,  
By Thoughts alone the Soul is made divine.  
Thoughts are the springs of all our actions here  
On Earth, tho' they themselves do not appear.  
They are the springs of Beauty, Order, Peace,  
The city's gallantries, the fields' increase.  
Rule, Government, and Kingdoms flow from them,  
And so doth all the New Jerusalem,  
At least the Glory, Splendour, and Delight,  
For 'tis by Thoughts that even she is bright.  
Thoughts are the things wherewith even God is  
crown'd,  
And as the Soul without them's useless found,  
So are all other creatures too. A Thought  
Is even the very cream of all He wrought.  
All Holy fear, and Love, and Reverence,  
With Honour, Joy, and Praise, as well as Sense,  
Are hidden in our thoughts. Thoughts are the things

That us affect : The honey and the stings  
Of all that is are seated in a Thought,  
Even while it seemeth weak, and next to nought.  
The matter of all pleasure, virtue, worth,  
Grief, anger, hate, revenge, which words set forth,  
Are Thoughts alone. Thoughts are the highest things,  
The very offspring of the King of Kings.  
Thoughts are a kind of strange Celestial Creature  
That when they're good, they're such in every feature,  
They bear the image of their Father's face,  
And beautify even all His dwelling-place :  
So nimble, volatile, and unconfined,  
Illimited, to which no form's assigned,  
So changeable, capacious, easy, free,  
That what itself doth please a Thought may be.  
From nothing to infinity it turns,  
Even in a moment : Now like fire it burns,  
Now's frozen ice : Now shapes the glorious sun,  
Now darkness in a moment doth become.  
Now all at once : Now crowded in a sand,  
Now fills the hemisphere, and sees a Land :  
Now on a sudden's wider than the sky,  
And now runs parile with the Deity.  
'Tis such that it may all or nothing be,  
And's made so active, voluble, and free  
Because 'tis capable of all that's good,  
And is the end of all when understood.  
A Thought can clothe itself with all the treasures  
Of God, and be the greatest of His pleasures.  
It all His laws, and glorious works, and ways,

And attributes and counsels, all His praise  
It can conceive and imitate, and give :  
It is the only being that doth live.  
'Tis capable of all perfection here,  
Of all His love and joy and glory there.  
It is the only beauty that doth shine,  
Most great, transcendent, Heavenly, and Divine.  
The very best or worst of things it is,  
The basis of all misery or bliss.  
Its measures and capacities are such,  
Their utmost measure we can never touch.  
Here ornament on ornament may still  
Be laid ; beauty on beauty, skill on skill,  
Strength still on strength, and life itself on life,  
'Tis Queen of all things, and its Maker's wife.  
The best of Thoughts is yet a thing unknown,  
But when 'tis perfect it is like His own :  
Intelligible, Endless, yet a sphere  
Substantial too : In which all things appear  
All worlds, all excellencies, senses, graces,  
Joys, pleasures, creatures, and the Angels faces.  
It shall be married ever unto all,  
And all embrace, tho' now it seemeth small.  
A Thought my Soul may omnipresent be,  
For all it toucheth which a Thought can see.  
O that mysterious Being ! Thoughts are Things  
Which rightly used make His creatures Kings



## DESIRE

### I

For giving me desire,  
An eager thirst, a burning ardent fire,  
A virgin infant flame,  
A Love with which into the world I came,  
An inward hidden Heavenly love,  
Which in my soul did work and move,  
And ever ever me inflame  
With restless longing, Heavenly avarice,  
That never could be satisfied,  
That did incessantly a Paradise  
Unknown suggest, and something undescried  
Discern, and bear me to it ; be  
Thy Name for ever praised by me.

### II

My parched and withered bones  
Burnt up did seem : My Soul was full of groans :  
My thoughts extensions were :  
Like paces, reaches, steps they did appear :  
They somewhat hotly did pursue,  
Knew that they had not all their due,

Nor ever quiet were :  
But made my flesh like hungry, thirsty ground,  
My heart a deep profound abyss,  
And every joy and pleasure but a wound,  
So long as I my Blessedness did miss.  
O Happiness ! A famine burns,  
And all my life to anguish turns !

### III

Where are the silent streams,  
The living waters and the glorious beams,  
The sweet reviving bowers,  
The shady groves, the sweet and curious flowers,  
The spring and trees, the Heavenly days,  
The flow'ry meads, and glorious rays,  
The gold and silver towers ?  
Alas ! all these are poor and empty things !  
Trees, waters, days, and shining beams,  
Fruits, flowers, bowers, shady groves and springs,  
No joy will yield, no more than silent streams ;  
Those are but dead material toys,  
And cannot make my Heavenly joys.

### IV

O Love ! Ye Amities,  
And friendships that appear above the skies !  
Ye feasts and living pleasures !  
Ye senses, honours, and imperial treasures !

Ye bridal joys ! ye high delights  
That satisfy all appetites !  
    Ye sweet affections, and  
Ye high respects ! Whatever joys there be  
    In triumphs, whatsoever stand  
In amicable sweet society,  
Whatever pleasures are at His right hand,  
    Ye must before I am Divine,  
    In full propriety be mine.

V

    This soaring, sacred thirst,  
Ambassador of bliss, approached first,  
    Making a place in me  
That made me apt to prize, and taste, and see.  
    For not the objects but the sense  
    Of things doth bliss to Souls dispense,  
    And make it, Lord, like thee.  
Sense, feeling, taste, complacency, and sight,  
    These are the true and real joys,  
The living, flowing inward, melting, bright,  
And Heavenly pleasures ; all the rest are toys :  
    All which are founded in Desire,  
    As light in flame and heat in fire.

## THOUGHTS IV

In Thy presence there is fullness of Joy, and at Thy  
right hand there are pleasures for ever more.

Thoughts are the wings on which the Soul doth fly,  
The messengers which soar above the sky,  
Elijah's fiery chariot, that conveys  
The Soul, even here, to those eternal joys.  
Thoughts are the privileged posts that soar  
Unto His throne, and there appear before  
Ourselves approach. These may at any time  
Above the clouds, above the stars may climb.  
The Soul is present by a Thought ; and sees  
The New Jerusalem, the Palaces,  
The Thrones, and feasts, the regions of the sky,  
The joys and treasures of the *Deity*.  
His wisdom makes all things so bright and pure,  
That they are worthy ever to endure.  
His glorious works, His laws and counsels are,  
When seen, all like Himself, beyond compare.  
All ages with His love and glory shine,  
As they are His all Kingdoms are Divine.

Whole Hosts of Angels at His throne attend,  
And joyful praises from His saints ascend.  
Thousands of thousands kneel before His face  
And all His benefits with joy embrace.  
His goodness makes all creatures for His pleasure,  
And makes itself His creatures chiefest treasure.  
Almighty power doth itself employ  
In all its works to make itself the joy  
Of all His hosts, and to complete the bliss  
Which omnipresent and eternal is.  
His omnipresence is an Endless Sphere,  
Wherein all worlds as his delights appear :  
His bounty is the spring of all delight ;  
Our blessedness, like His, is infinite.  
His glory endless is and doth surround  
And fill all worlds without or end or bound.  
What hinders then but we in Heaven may be  
Even here on Earth did we but rightly see ?  
As mountains, chariots, horsemen all on fire,  
To guard Elisha did of old conspire,  
Which yet his servant could not see, being blind,  
Ourselves environ'd with His joys we find.  
Eternity itself is that true light  
That doth enclose us being infinite.  
The very seas do overflow and swim  
With precious nectars as they flow from Him.  
The stable Earth which we beneath behold,•  
Is far more precious than if made of gold.  
Fowls, fishes, beasts, trees, herbs, and precious  
flowers,

Seeds, spices, gums, and aromatic bowers,  
Wherewith we are enclos'd and serv'd each day  
By His appointment do their tributes pay,  
And offer up themselves as gifts of love,  
Bestowed on Saints, proceeding from above.  
Could we but justly, wisely, truly prize  
These blessings, we should be above the skies,  
And praises sing with pleasant heart and voice,  
Adoring with the Angels should rejoice.  
The fertile clouds give rain, the purer air  
Is warm and wholesome, soft and bright and fair.  
The stars are wonders which His wisdom names,  
The glorious Sun the knowing Soul enflames.  
The very Heavens in their sacred worth  
At once serve us and set His glory forth.  
Their influences touch the grateful sense,  
They please the eye with their magnificence ;  
While in His temple all His saints do sing,  
And for His bounty praise their Heavenly King.  
All these are in His omnipresence, still  
As living waters from His throne they trill ;  
As tokens of His love they all flow down,  
Their beauty use and worth the Soul do crown.  
Men are like Cherubims on either hand,  
Whose flaming love by His divine command  
Is made a sacrifice to ours ; which streams  
Throughout all Worlds, and fills them all with beams.  
We drink our fill, and take their beauty in,  
While Jesus' blood refines the Soul from Sin.  
His grievous Cross is a supreme delight,

And of all Heavenly ones the greatest sight.  
His Throne is near, 'tis just before our face,  
And all Eternity His dwelling place.  
His dwelling place is full of joys and pleasures,  
His throne a fountain of Eternal treasures.  
His omnipresence is all sight and love,  
Which whoso sees he ever dwells above.  
With soft embraces it doth clasp the Soul,  
And watchfully all enemies control.  
It enters in and doth a Temple find,  
Or make a living one within the Mind,  
That while God's omnipresence in us lies  
His treasures might be all before our eyes :  
For Minds and Souls intent upon them here  
Do with the Seraphim's above appear :  
And are like spheres of bliss, by love and sight,  
By joy, thanksgiving, praise, made infinite.  
O give me Grace to see Thy face, and be  
A constant Mirror of Eternity.  
Let my pure Soul, transformed to a thought  
Attend upon Thy Throne, and, as it ought,  
Spend all its time in feeding on Thy love,  
And never from Thy sacred presence move.  
So shall my conversation ever be  
In Heaven, and I, O Lord my God, with Thee !

## GOODNESS

### I

The bliss of other men is my delight,  
    (When once my principles are right :)  
And every Soul which mine doth see  
    A treasury.

The face of God is goodness unto all,  
And while He thousands to His throne doth call,  
    While millions bathe in pleasures,  
And do behold His treasures,  
    The joys of all  
    On mine do fall,  
And even my infinity doth seem  
A drop without them of a mean esteem.

### II

The light which on ten thousand faces shines,  
    The beams which crown ten thousand vines  
    With Glory, and Delight, appear  
    As if they were  
Reflected only from them all for me,  
That I a greater beauty there might see.



Thus Stars do beautify  
The azure canopy :  
    Gilded with rays,  
    Ten thousand ways  
They serve me, while the Sun that on them shin  
Adorns those stars and crowns those bleeding vin

### III

Where Goodness is within, the Soul doth reign.  
    Goodness the only Sovereign !  
    Goodness delights alone to see  
    Felicity.  
And while the Image of His goodness lives  
In me, whatever He to any gives  
    Is my delight and ends  
    In me, in all my friends :  
        For goodness is  
        The spring of bliss,  
And 'tis the end of all it gives away  
And all it gives it ever doth enjoy.

### IV

His Goodness ! Lord, it is His highest Glory !  
    The very Grace of all His story !  
    What other thing can me delight  
    But the blest sight  
Of His Eternal Goodness ? While His love,  
His burning love the bliss of all doth prove,

While it beyond the ends  
Of Heaven and Earth extends,  
And multiplies  
Above the skies,  
His Glory, Love, and Goodness in my sight  
Is for my pleasure made more infinite.

V

The soft and swelling grapes that on their vines  
Receive the lively warmth that shines  
Upon them, ripen there for me :  
Or drink they be,  
Or meat. The stars salute my pleased sense  
With a derived and borrowed influence :  
But better vines do grow,  
Far better wines do flow  
Above, and while  
The Sun doth smile  
Upon the Lilies there, and all things warm ;  
Their pleasant odours do my spirit charm.

VI

Their rich affections me like precious seas  
Of nectar and ambrosia please,  
Their eyes are stars, or more Divine  
And brighter shine :  
Their lips are soft and swelling grapes, their tongues  
A Quire of blessed and harmonious songs.

Their bosoms fraught with love  
Are Heavens all Heavens above ;  
And being Images of God they are  
The highest joys His Goodness did prepare.

## [THE SOUL'S GLORY]

In making bodies Love could not express  
Itself, or Art ; unless it made them less.  
O what a monster had in man been seen,  
Had every thumb or toe a mountain been !  
What worlds must he devour when he did eat ?  
What oceans drink ? Yet could not all his meat  
Or stature, make him like an Angel shine ;  
Or make his Soul in Glory more divine.  
A Soul it is that makes us truly great,  
Whose little bodies make us more complete.  
An Understanding that is Infinite,  
An endless, wide, and everlasting Sight,  
That can enjoy all things and nought exclude,  
Is the most sacred greatness may be viewed.  
'Twas inconvenient that his bulk should be  
An endless hill ; he nothing then could see :  
No figure have, no motion, beauty, place,  
No colour, feature, member, light, or grace.  
A body like a mountain is but cumber,  
An endless body is but idle lumber.

It spoils converse, and Time itself devours,  
While meat in vain in feeding idle powers,  
Excessive bulk being most injurious found,  
To those conveniences which men have crown'd.  
His Wisdom did His power here repress,  
God made man greater while He made Him less.

## [FINITE YET INFINITE]

His Power bounded, greater is in might,  
Than if let loose 'twere wholly infinite.  
He could have made an endless Sea by this,  
But then it had not been a Sea of Bliss.  
Did water from the centre to the skies  
Ascend, 'twould drown whatever else we prize.  
The Ocean bounded in a finite shore,  
Is better far because it is no more,  
No use nor glory would in that be seen,  
His power made it endless in esteem.  
Had not the sun been bounded in its sphere,  
Did all the world in one fair flame appear,  
And were that flame a real infinite,  
'Twould yield no profit, splendour, nor delight.  
Its corps confined and beams extended be  
Effects of wisdom in the Deity.  
One star made infinite would all exclude,  
An earth made infinite could ne'er be viewed.  
But one being fashioned for the other's sake,  
He bounding all, did all most useful make :  
And which is best, in profit and delight,  
Tho' not in bulk, they all are infinite.

## ON NEWS

### I

News from a foreign country came,  
As if my treasure and my wealth lay there :  
So much it did my heart enflame !  
'Twas wont to call my soul into mine ear  
Which thither went to meet  
The approaching sweet,  
And on the threshold stood,  
To entertain the unknown Good.  
It hovered there  
As if 'twould leave mine ear,  
And was so eager to embrace  
The joyful tidings as they came,  
'Twould almost leave its dwelling place,  
To entertain that same.

### II

As if the tidings were the things,  
My very joys themselves, my foreign treasure,

Or else did bear them on their wings ;  
With so much joy they came, with so much pleasure.  
My Soul stood at that gate  
To recreate  
Itself with bliss : and to  
Be pleased with speed. A fuller view  
It fain would take,  
Yet journeys back would make  
Unto my heart : as if 'twould fain  
Go out to meet, yet stay within  
To fit a place to entertain,  
And bring the tidings in.

### III

What sacred instinct did inspire  
My Soul in childhood with a hope so strong ?  
What secret force mov'd my desire  
To expect my joys beyond the seas, so young ?  
Felicity I knew  
Was out of view :  
And being here alone,  
I saw that happiness was gone  
From me ! For this,  
I thirsted absent bliss,  
And thought that sure beyond the seas,  
Or else in something near at hand  
I knew not yet, (since nought did please  
I knew) my Bliss did stand.



#### IV

But little did the infant dream  
That all the treasures of the world were by :  
And that himself was so the cream  
And crown of all which round about did lie.  
Yet thus it was : The Gem,  
The Diadem,  
The Ring enclosing all  
That stood upon this earthly ball ;  
The Heavenly Eye,  
Much wider than the sky,  
Wherein they all included were,  
The glorious Soul that was the King  
Made to possess them, did appear  
A small and little thing !

## [THE TRIUMPH]

### I

A life of Sabbaths here beneath !  
Continual Jubilees and Joys !  
The days of Heaven, while we breathe  
On Earth ! where sin all bliss destroys :  
This is a triumph of delights !  
That doth exceed all appetites.  
No joy can be compared to this,  
It is a life of perfect bliss.

### II

Of perfect bliss ! How can it be ?  
To conquer Satan and to reign  
In such a vale of misery,  
Where vipers, stings and tears remain,  
Is to be crown'd with victory.  
To be content, divine, and free  
Even here beneath is great delight,  
And next the beatific sight.

### III

But inward lusts do oft assail,  
Temptations work us much annoy ;  
We'll therefore weep, and to prevail  
Shall be a more celestial joy.  
To have no other enemy  
But one ; and to that one to die :  
To fight with that and conquer it,  
Is better than in peace to sit.

### IV

'Tis better for a little time :  
For he that all his lusts doth quell,  
Shall find this life to be his prime,  
And vanquish Sin and conquer Hell.  
The next shall be his double joy,  
And that which here seem'd to destroy  
Shall in the other life appear  
A Root of Bliss ; a pearl each tear.

## [THE ONLY ILL]

### I

Sin !  
O only fatal woe,  
That makes me sad and mourning go !  
That all my joys dost spoil,  
His Kingdom and my Soul defile !  
I never can agree  
With thee.

### II

Thou !  
Only thou ! O thou alone,  
And my obdurate Heart of Stone,  
The poison and the foes  
Of my enjoyments and repose,  
The only bitter ill :  
Dost kill !

### III

Oh !

I cannot meet with thee,  
Nor once approach thy memory,  
But all my joys are dead,  
And all my sacred treasures fled,  
As if I now did dwell  
In Hell.

### IV

Lord !

O hear how short I breathe !  
See how I tremble here beneath !  
A Sin ! its ugly face  
More terror than its dwelling place  
Contains, (O dreadful sin)  
Within !

## THE RECOVERY

Sin ! wilt thou vanquish me !  
And shall I yield the victory ?  
Shall all my joys be spoiled,  
And pleasures soiled  
By thee !  
Shall I remain  
As one that's slain  
And never more lift up the head ?  
Is not my Saviour dead !  
His blood, thy bane ; my balsam, bliss, joy, wine,  
Shall thee destroy ; heal, feed, make me Divine.

## [THE GLORY OF ISRAEL]

### I

In Salem dwelt a Glorious King,  
Rais'd from a shepherd's lowly state,  
That did His praises like an angel sing  
    Who did the World create.  
By many great and bloody wars  
He was advanced unto thrones :  
But more delighted in the stars  
Than in the splendour of his precious stones.  
Nor gold nor silver did his eye regard :  
The works of God were his sublime reward.

### II

A warlike champion he had been,  
And many feats of chivalry  
Had done : in kingly courts his eye had seen  
    A vast variety  
Of earthly joys : yet he despised  
Those fading honours and false pleasures

Which are by mortals so much prized ;  
And placed His happiness in other treasures :  
No state of life which in this world we find  
Could yield contentment to his greater mind.

### III

His fingers touched his trembling lyre,  
And every quivering string did yield  
A sound that filled all the Jewish Quire,  
And echoed in the field.  
No pleasure was so great to him  
As in a silent night to see  
The moon and stars : a Cherubim  
Above them even here he seemed to be.  
Enflam'd with love it was his great desire,  
To sing, contemplate, ponder, and admire.

### IV

He was a prophet and foresaw  
Things extant in the World to come :  
He was a judge and ruled by a law  
That than the honeycomb  
Was sweeter far : he was a sage,  
And all his people could advise ;  
An oracle whose every page  
Contained in verse the greatest mysteries :  
But most he then enjoy'd himself when he  
Did as a poet praise the Deity.



## V

A shepherd, soldier, and divine,  
 A judge, a courtier, and a king,  
 Priest, angel, prophet, oracle did shine  
     At once when he did sing.  
 Philosopher and poet too  
 Did in his melody appear ;  
 All these in him did please the view  
 Of those that did his Heavenly music hear,  
 And every drop that from his flowing quill  
 Came down did all the world with nectar fill.

## VI

He had a deep and perfect sense  
 Of all the glories and the pleasures  
 That in God's works are hid ; the excellence  
     Of such transcendent treasures  
 Made him on earth an Heavenly King,  
 And fill'd his solitudes with joy ;  
 He never did more sweetly sing  
 Than when alone, tho' that doth mirth destroy :  
 Sense did his soul with Heavenly life inspire  
 And made him seem in God's celestial Quire.

## VII

Rich, sacred, deep and precious things  
 Did here on earth the man surround ;

With all the glory of the King of Kings  
He was most strangely crown'd.  
His clear soul and open sight  
Among the Sons of God did see  
Things filling angels with delight :  
His ear did hear their Heavenly melodie  
And when he was alone he all became,  
That Bliss implied, or did increase his fame.

### VIII

All arts he then did exercise ;  
And, as his God he did adore,  
By secret ravishments above the skies  
He carried was before  
He died. His soul did see and feel  
What others know not ; and became,  
While he before his God did kneel,  
A constant Heavenly pure seraphic flame.  
O that I might unto his throne aspire,  
And all his joys above the stars admire !

## ASPIRATION

### I

Unto the Spring of purest Life  
Aspires my withered heart,  
My Soul confined in this Flesh  
Employs both strength and art  
Working, struggling, suing still  
From exile home to part.

### II

Who can utter the full Joy  
Which that high place doth hold,  
Where all the buildings founded are  
On Orient Pearls untold,  
And all the work of those high rooms  
Doth shine with beams of Gold !

### III

The season is not chang'd, but still  
Both Sun and Moon are Bright,  
The Lamb of this fair City is

That clear immortal Light  
Whose Presence makes Eternal Day  
Which never ends in Night.

#### IV

Nay all the Saints themselves shall Shine  
As Bright as brightest Sun,  
In fullest Triumph crowned they  
To mutual Joys shall run,  
And safely count their fights and foes  
When once the war is done.

#### V

For being freed from all defect  
They feel no fleshly war,  
Or rather both the flesh and mind  
At length united are,  
For joying in so rich a peace  
They can admit no jar.

#### VI

For ever cheerful and content  
They from mishaps are free ;  
No sickness there can threaten health.  
Nor young men old can be :  
There they enjoy such Happy State  
That in't no change they see.

## VII

Who know the Knower of all things  
What can they choose but know ?  
They all behold each other's hearts  
And all their secrets shew :  
One act of will and of not will  
From all their minds do flow.

## VIII

Though all their merits diverse be  
According to their pains,  
Yet Love doth make that every one's  
Which any other gains,  
And all which doth belong to one  
To all of them pertains.

## IX

O Happy Soul which shall behold  
Thy King still present there,  
And mayst from thence behold the World  
Run round, secure from fear,  
With Stars and Planets, Moon and Sun,  
Still moving in their Sphere !

## X

O King of Kings give me such strength  
In this great War depending,

That I may here prevail at length,  
And ever be ascending,  
Till I at last arrive to Thee,  
The Source of all Felicity!

[I have taken the above poem from Traherne's MS. volume of "Meditations and Devotions." It is not his, however, but a translation of S. Peter Damiani's famous hymn, "Ad Perennis vitæ Fontem." The above rendering is from "The Meditations, Manuall, and Soliloquia of the Glorious Doctour, St. Augustine," 1631. But it is much abridged and considerably altered in Traherne's version, and therefore I have printed it. Those who wish to refer to the original will find it among the "Inedited Sacred Poems" at the end of Mr. W. T. Brooke's edition of Giles Fletcher's "Christ's Victory and Triumph."]

## [SUPPLICATION]\*

### I

Come, Holy Ghost, Eternal God,  
Our hearts with Life inspire,  
Enkindle zeal in all our Souls,  
And fill us with Thy Heavenly fire.

### II

Send forth Thy Beams and let Thy Grace  
Upon my spirit shine,  
That I may all Thy works enjoy,  
Revive, sing praises, be Divine.

This is, of course, part of a translation of "Veni Creator Spiritus." It is probably, but not certainly, by Traherne.

AN HYMN UPON ST. BARTHOLO-  
MEW'S DAY

I

What powerful Spirit lives within !  
What active Angel doth inhabit here !  
What heavenly light inspires my skin,  
Which doth so like a Deity appear !  
A Living Temple of all ages, I  
Within me see  
A Temple of Eternity !  
All Kingdoms I descry  
In me.

II

An inward Omnipresence here  
Mysteriously like His within me stands,  
Whose knowledge is a Sacred Sphere  
That in itself at once includes all lands.  
There is some Angel that within me can  
Both talk and move,  
And walk and fly and see and love,  
A man on earth, a man  
Above.



### III

Dull walls of clay my Spirit leaves,  
And in a foreign Kingdom doth appear,  
This great Apostle it receives,  
Admires His Works and sees them, standing here.  
Within myself from East to West I move  
As if I were  
At once a Cherubim and Sphere,  
Or was at once above  
And here.

### IV

The Soul's a messenger whereby  
Within our inward Temple we may be  
Even like the very Deity  
In all the parts of His Eternity.  
O live within and leave unweildy dross !  
Flesh is but clay !  
O fly my Soul and haste away  
To Jesus Throne or Cross !  
Obey !

## POEMS EXTRACTED FROM TRAHERNE'S "CHRISTIAN ETHICKS"

[All the following poems (excepting those in the "Appendix") are taken from Traherne's "Christian Ethicks." That they are all from his own pen cannot, I think, be doubted. They are entirely in his manner, and have little or no resemblance to that of any other poet. As the reader will see, I have, where necessary, quoted a few sentences from Traherne's prose in order to render the design of the poem more intelligible.]

[From pp. 344-5]

"How glorious the Counsel and Design of God is for the Atchieving of this Great End, for the making of all Vertues more compleat and Excellent, and for the Heightening of their Beauty and Perfection we will exemplifie here in the Perfection of Courage. For the Height and depth and Splendor of every Vertue is of great Concernment to the Perfection of the Soul since the Glory of its Life is seated in the Accomplishment of its essence, in the fruit it yieldeth in its Operations. Take it in Verse made long ago upon this occasion—

For Man to Act as if his Soul did see  
The very Brightness of Eternity ;  
For Man to Act as if his Love did burn  
Above the Spheres, even while it's in its Urne ;

For Man to Act even in the Wilderness,  
As if he did those Sovereign Joys possess,  
Which do at once confirm, stir up, enflame,  
And perfect Angels ; having not the same !  
It doth increase the value of his Deeds,  
In this a Man a Seraphim exceeds :  
To Act on Obligations yet unknown,  
To Act upon Rewards as yet unshewn,  
To keep Commands whose Beauty's yet unseen,  
To cherish and retain a Zeal between  
Sleeping and Waking ; shews a constant care  
And that a deeper Love, a Love so rare  
That no Eye Service may with it compare.  
The Angels, who are faithful while they view  
His Glory, know not what themselves would  
do,

Were they in our Estate ! A Dimmer Light  
Perhaps would make them erre as well as we,  
And in the Coldness of a darker Night  
Forgetful and Lukewarm Themselves might be.  
Our very Rust shall cover us with Gold,  
Our Dust shall sprinkle \* while their Eyes behold  
The Glory Springing from a feeble State,  
Where meer Belief doth, if not conquer Fate,  
Surmount and pass what it doth Antedate.

[From p. 326]

In Matters of Art the force of Temperance is undeniable.  
It relateth not only to our Meats and Drinks, but to all our  
Behaviours, Passions, and Desires.

\* ?sparkle.

All Musick, Sawces, Feasts, Delights and Pleasures  
Games, Dancing, Arts consist in govern'd Measures ;  
Much more do Words and Passions of the Mind  
Temperance their sacred Beauty find.

[From pp. 347-9]

If you say it would be Beneficial to God or to that Spectator or that intelligible Power, that Spirit for whom it was made : It is apparent that no Corporeal Being can be serviceable to a Spirit but only by the Beauty of those Services it performeth to other Corporeals that are capable of receiving them, and that therefore all Corporeals must be limited and bounded for each other's sake. And for this Cause it is that a Philosophical Poet said ;

As in a Clock, 'tis hinder'd Force doth bring  
The Wheels to order'd Motion by a Spring ;  
Which order'd Motion guides a stiddy Hand  
In useful sort at Figures just to stand ;  
Which, were it not by Counter-balance staid,  
The Fabrick quickly would aside be laid  
As wholly useless : So a Might too Great  
But well proportion'd makes the World compleat,  
Power well-bounded is more Great in Might  
Than if let loose 'twere wholly Infinite.  
He could have made an endless Sea by this,  
But then it had not been a Sea of Bliss ;  
A Sea that's bounded in a finite shore  
Is better far because it is no more.  
Should Waters endlessly exceed the Skies  
They'd drown the World, and all whate'er we prize,

Had the bright Sun been Infinite its Flame  
Had burnt the World and quite consumed the same  
That Flame would yield no splendour to the Sigh  
Twould be but Darkness though 'twere Infinite.  
One Star made Infinite would all exclude,  
An Earth made Infinite could ne'er be view'd.  
But all being bounded for each other's sake,  
He, bounding all, did all most useful make :  
And which is best, in Profit and Delight  
Though not in Bulk, He made all Infinite !  
He, in his Wisdom, did their use extend  
By all, to all the World from End to End.  
In all Things all Things service do to all ;  
And thus a Sand is Endless, though most small ;  
And every Thing is truly Infinite  
In its Relation deep and exquisite.

[From p. 383 in Chapter XXV On Meekness]

Were all the World a Paradise of Ease  
'Twere easie then to live in Peace.  
Were all men Wise, Divine, and Innocent,  
Just, Holy, Peaceful and Content,  
Kind, Loving, True and alwaies Good  
As in the Golden-Age they stood ;  
'Twere easie then to live  
In all Delight and Glory, full of Love,  
Blest as the Angels are above.  
But we such Principles must now attain  
(If we true Blessedness would gain)  
As those are which will help to make us reign

Over Disorders, Injuries,  
Ingratitudes, Calamities,  
Affronts, Oppressions, Slanders, Wrongs,  
Lies, Angers, bitter Tongues  
The reach of Malice must surmount, and quell  
The very Rage and Power of Hell.

[From pp. 394-9]

## OF MEEKNESS

### I

Mankind is sick, the World distempered lies  
Opprest with Sins and Miseries.  
Their Sins are Woes ; a long corrupted Train  
Of Poyson, drawn from Adam's vein,  
Stains all his Seed, and all his Kin  
Are one Disease of Life within ;  
They all torment themselves !  
The World's one Bedlam, or a greater Cave  
Of Mad-men that do alwaies rave.

### II

The Wise and Good like kind Physicians are,  
That strive to heal them by their Care ;  
They Physick and their Learning calmly use  
Although the Patient them abuse,  
For since the Sickness is (they find)

A sad Distemper of the Mind,  
All railings they impute,  
All Injuries, unto the sore Disease  
They are expresly come to ease.

### III

If we would to the World's distempered Mind  
Impute the Rage which there we find,  
We might, even in the midst of all our Foes  
Enjoy and feel a sweet Repose,  
Might pity all the Griefs we sec,  
Anointing every Malady  
With precious Oil and Balm;  
And while ourselves are calm, our Art improve  
To rescue them and show our Love.

### IV

But let's not fondly our own selves beguile ;  
If we Revile 'cause they Revile,  
Ourselves infected with their sore Disease  
Need other's Helps to give us ease ;  
For we more Mad than they remain,  
Need to be cut, and need a Chain  
Far more than they. Our Brain  
Is craz'd, and if we put our Wit to theirs,  
We may be justly made their Heirs.

## V

But while with open eyes we clearly see  
 The brightness of His Majesty ;  
 While all the World by Sin to Satan sold,  
 In daily Wickedness grows old,  
 Men in chains of Darkness lye,  
 In Bondage and Iniquity,  
 And pierce and grieve themselves !  
 The dismal Woes wherein they crawl, enhance  
 The peace of our Inheritance.

## VI

We wonder to behold our selves so nigh  
 To so much Sin and Misery,  
 And yet to see our selves so safe from harm !  
 What Amulet, what hidden Charm  
 Could fortifie and raise the Soul  
 So far above them and controul  
 Such fierce Malignity ?  
 The brightness and the glory which we see  
 Is made a greater Mystery.

## VII

And while we feel how much our God doth love  
 The Peace of Sinners, how much move  
 And sue, and thirst, intreat, lament, and grieve  
 For all the Crimes in which they live,



And seek and wait and call again,  
And long to save them from the pain  
Of Sin, from all their Woe !  
With greater thirst as well as grief we try,  
How to relieve their Misery.

## VIII

The life and splendour of Felicity,  
Whose floods so overflowing be,  
The streams of Joy which round about his Throne  
Enrich and fill each Holy One,  
Are so abundant, that we can  
Spare all, even all to any Man !  
And have it all ourselves !  
Nay, have the more ! We long to make them see  
The sweetness of Felicity.

## IX

While we contemplate their Distresses, how  
Blind Wretches, they in bondage bow,  
And tear and wound themselves, and vex and  
groan,  
And chafe and fret so near His Throne  
And know not what they ail, but lye  
Tormented in their Misery,  
(Like Mad-men that are blind)  
In works of darkness nigh such full Delight :  
That they might find and see the sight,

## X

What would we give ! that these might likewise see  
The Glory of His Majesty,  
The joy and fulness of that high delight  
Whose Blessedness is infinite !  
We would even cease to live to gain  
Them from their misery and pain,  
And make them with us reign,  
For they themselves would be our greatest Treasures  
When sav'd our own most Heavenly Pleasures.

## XI

O holy Jesus who didst for us die,  
And on the Altar bleeding lie,  
Bearing all torment, pain, reproach, and shame,  
That we, by vertue of the same,  
Though enemies to God, might be  
Redeem'd and set at liberty :  
As thou didst us forgive,  
So meekly let us love to others shew  
And live in Heaven on Earth below.

## XII

Let's prize their Souls, and let them be our Gems,  
Our Temples and our Diadems,  
Our Brides, our Friends, our fellow-Members, Eyes,  
Hands, Hearts and Souls, our Victories,

And Spoils and Trophies, our own Joys !  
Compar'd to Souls all else are Toys ;  
O Jesus, let them be  
Such unto us as they are unto Thee,  
Vessels of Glory and Felicity !

### XIII

How will they love us, when they find our Care  
Brought them all thither where they are !  
When they conceive what terror 'tis to dwell  
In all the punishments of Hell ;  
And in a lively manner see,  
O Christ, eternal Joys in thee !  
How will they all delight  
In praising Thee for us with all their might  
How sweet a Grace, how infinite !

[From p. 425.]

## OF CONTENTMENT

Contentment is a sleepy thing !  
If it in Death alone must die,  
A quiet Mind is worse than Poverty,  
Unless it from Enjoyment spring !  
That's Blessedness alone that makes a King !  
Wherein the Joys and Treasures are so great,  
They all the powers of the Soul employ,

And fill it with a Work compleat.  
While it doth all enjoy.  
True Joys alone Contentment do inspire,  
Enrich Content and make our Courage higher.  
Content alone's a dead and silent Stone ;  
The real life of Bliss  
Is Glory reigning in a Throne.  
Where all Enjoyment is,  
The Soul of Man is so inclin'd to see,  
Without his Treasures no man's Soul can be,  
Nor rest content Uncrown'd !  
Desire and Love  
Must in the height of all their Rapture move,  
Where there is true Felicity.  
Employment is the very life and ground  
Of Life itself ; whose pleasant Motion is  
The form of Bliss :  
All Blessedness a life with Glory Crown'd :  
Life ! Life is all ; in its most full extent  
Stretcht out to all things, and with all Content !

[From p. 456, Of Magnanimity.]

And if the Glory and Esteem I have,  
Be nothing else than what my Silver gave,  
If, for no other ground,  
I am with Love or Praises crown'd,  
'Tis such a shame, such vile, such base Repute,  
'Tis better starve than eat such empty Fruit.



## APPENDIX

The poems in the foregoing pages are derived (as I have already explained) from three separate MS. volumes, and from the author's prose volume, entitled "Christian Ethicks." The bulk of them (ending with "Goodness") are from the folio volume. The remainder—with the exception of the three which are from the volume of "Meditations and Devotions"—are from the prose volume entitled "Centuries of Meditations." I have printed all the poems which I have found in these various sources, with only one exception. This is a poem which appears in the folio volume, but which is there crossed through as though marked for suppression.\* Whether this mark of suppression was made by the author or by another person there are no means of judging; but as the poem in question is, as I think,

\* Several passages in other poems are thus marked. Usually where these marks appear—but not invariably so—there is a slight falling off in the author's inspiration—a falling off, however, which is only apparent to a severe critical scrutiny. As these passages, however, could not be omitted without leaving palpable *lacune* in the poems I have taken no notice of them (save in one instance where I have suppressed a stanza which is clearly superfluous), preferring to leave the critical reader to discover such inequalities for himself.

somewhat below the level of its companions, I have thought it better to reserve it for the appendix than to print it between the poems "Thoughts" I. and II., where it occurs in the MS.

## BLISS

### I

All Bliss  
Consists in this,  
To do as Adam did,  
And not to know those superficial Toys  
Which in the Garden once were hid.  
Those little new-invented things  
Cups, saddles, crowns are childish joys,  
So ribbands are and rings,  
Which all our happiness destroys.

### II

Nor God  
In His abode,  
Nor Saints, nor little boys,  
Nor Angels made them ; only foolish men  
Grown mad with custom on those toys,  
Which more increase their wants, do dotc,  
And when they older are do then  
Those baubles chiefly note  
With greedier eyes, more boys tho' men.

To enable the reader to judge whether my hypothesis that the author of " A Serious and Patheticall Contemplation of the Mercies of God " is also the author of the other poems contained in the present volume, is well or ill-founded, I will now print the three poems which appear in the above-mentioned work. They are as follows :

[LIFE'S BLESSEDNESS]

While I, O Lord, exalted by Thy hand  
Above the skies, in glory seem to stand,  
The skies being made to serve me, as they do,  
While I thy Glories in thy Goodness view.  
To be in Glory higher than the skies  
Is greater bliss than 'tis in place to rise  
Above the Stars : More blessed and divine  
To live and see than like the Sun to shine.  
O what Profoundness in my Body lies  
For whom the Earth was made, the Sea, the Skies !  
So greatly high our human Bodies are  
That Angels scarcely may with these compare :  
In all the heights of Glory seated, they  
Above the Sun in Thine eternal day  
Are seen to shine ; with greater gifts adorned  
Than Gold with Light or Flesh with Life suborned ;  
Suns are but Servants, Skies beneath their feet ;  
The Stars but Stones ; Moons but to serve them meet.



Beyond all heights above the World they reign  
In thy great Throne ordained to remain.  
All Tropes are Clouds ; Truth doth itself excel,  
Whatever Heights Hyperboles can tell.

### [THE RESURRECTION]

Then shall each Limb a spring of Joy be found,  
And every member with its Glory crown'd :  
While all the Senses, fill'd with all the Good  
That ever Ages in them understood  
Transported are : Containing Worlds of Treasure  
At one delight with all their Joy and Pleasure,  
From whence, like Rivers, Joy shall ever flow,  
Affect the Soul, though in the Body grow,  
Return again and make the Body shine  
Like Jesus Christ, while both in one combine.  
Mysterious Contracts are between the Soul,  
Which touch the Spirits and by those its Bowl ;  
The Marrow, Bowels, Spirits, melt and move,  
Dissolving ravish, teach them how to love.  
He that could bring the Heavens thro' the eye,  
And make the World within the Fancy lie,  
By beams of Light that closing meet in one,  
From all the parts of His celestial Throne,  
Far more than this in framing Bliss can do,  
Inflame the Body and the Spirit too

Can make the Soul by Sense to feel and see,  
And with her Joy the Senses wrap'd to be :  
Yea, while the Flesh or Body subject lies  
To those Affections which in Souls arise ;  
All holy Glories from the Soul redound,  
And in the Body by the Soul abound,  
Are felt within and ravish ev'ry Sense  
With all the Godhead's glorious Excellence,  
Who found the way Himself to dwell within,  
As if even Flesh were nigh to Him of kin :  
His Goodness, Wisdom, Power, Love Divine,  
Make by the Soul convey'd the Body shine,  
Not like the Sun (that earthly Darkness is)  
But in the strengths and heights of all this bliss,  
For God designed thy Body for His sake,  
A Temple of the Deity to make.

## THE WAYS OF WISDOM

“ Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all  
her paths are peace.”

These sweeter far than lilies are,  
No roses may with these compare !  
How these excel  
No tongue can tell,  
Which he that well and truly knows  
With praise and joy he goes !

How great and happy's he that knows his ways  
    To be divine and heavenly Joys :  
To whom each city is more brave  
Than walls of pearl and streets which gold doth pave :  
    Whose open eyes  
    Behold the skies ;  
Who loves their wealth and beauty more  
    Than kings love golden ore !  
Who sees the heavenly ancient ways  
Of God the Lord with joy and praise,  
    More than the skies  
    With open eyes  
Doth prize them all ; yea, more than gems,  
    And regal diadems ;  
That more esteemeth mountains, as they are,  
    Than if they gold and silver were :  
To whom the sun more pleasure brings  
Than crowns and thrones and palaces to kings :  
    That knows his ways  
    To be the joys  
And way of God—those things who knows  
    With joy and praise he goes !

I do not think it is necessary to spend much time or ink in endeavouring to prove that the author of these three poems must have been also the writer of the other poems contained in this volume. Unless it be contended that no conclusion as to authorship can be drawn from similarity of style, sentiment, and peculiarities of expression, I do not see how it is

possible for any one who carefully considers the matter to entertain a reasonable doubt about it. Not even the hypothesis of imitation by one author of the style of another can here be entertained—for no man can imitate what is not known to him.

Every poet has his special topics, his favourite terms of expression, his peculiar vocabulary, and even his pet rhymes; or, to put it otherwise, his King Charles's head, which is bound, sooner or later, to make its appearance in his verse. I think it may be truly said that there is nothing in the three poems taken from "A Serious and Patheticall Contemplation of the Mercies of God" which cannot be paralleled in the other poems contained in this volume. All are characterised by the same fervent piety, the same command of expression and musical diction, the same dwelling upon the ideas that though God is necessary to man, yet man also is necessary to God, and that the body (instead of being, according to the ordinary theological belief, a *corpus vile* of corruption) is "a spring of Joy" crowned with glory; and the same continual allusions to the great natural phenomena. When to these resemblances we add the many small coincidences of words and phrases which are always recurring in the poems, the evidence of common authorship becomes, in my opinion, too strong to be resisted.

Perhaps it may be worth while to quote a few instances of these resemblances out of the many which might be given. In the second stanza of "The Person" we have

Men's hands than angels' wings  
Are truer wealth even here below.

In "Life's Blessedness" we have  
So greatly high our human bodies are  
That Angels scarcely may with them compare.

In the fifth stanza of "The Estate" we have  
The laws of God, the Works he did create,  
His ancient ways, are His and my Estate.

In "The Ways of Wisdom" we have  
Who sees the heavenly ancient ways.

In "Thoughts IV." we have  
The very heavens in their sacred worth  
At once serve us and set his Glory forth.

In "Life's Blessedness" we have  
The skies being made to serve me, as they do,  
While I Thy Glories in Thy Goodness view.

In "The Influx" we have  
No soul but stone, no man but clay am I.

In "Life's Blessedness" we have  
The stars but stones.

The reader will doubtless have observed that our poet was very fond of using "treasure" and "pleasure" as rhymes. He seldom omits to bring them in in a poem of any length, and it will be observed that they are introduced in "The Resurrection." Certain defective

rhymes (or no rhymes) also occur pretty frequently, as "lay," "joy," "away," "enjoy." In "The Ways of Wisdom" we have "ways" and "joys."

I think I have produced evidence enough to convince the reader of the soundness of my contention: if not, I will undertake to produce a good deal more. It is fortunate, indeed, that "A Serious and Patheticall Contemplation" should have stolen into print (for neither at the time of its publication nor subsequently does it appear to have attracted any attention), for without it we should have been without a clue to the authorship of these remarkable poems.

Mr. W. T. Brooke has discovered in the British Museum a broadside with the following title, "A Congratulatory Poem on the Right Honourable S<sup>r</sup> Orlando Bridgman, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal of England," which, he suggests, may possibly have been written by the author of the poems here printed. But though it is a poem of considerable merit, it has, in my opinion, no correspondence in style with Traherne's poems. A few lines from it, however, will not be altogether out of place here :

"Were all your own Rolls searcht scarce should we  
find

That noble seat filled with so fit a mind :  
So brave a mind as baseness ne'er allays,  
So great a mind as greatness cannot raise,  
So just a mind as interest can't seduce,

So wise a mind as colours can't abuse,  
So large a mind as largest Trusts do crave,  
So calm a mind as Equity should have.  
High Courtships construed in the present tense,  
Law's Oracle without perplexed sense,  
A sober piety in a virtuoso,  
And an Orlando without Furioso."

### TRAHERNE'S "SERIOUS AND PATHETICALL CONTEMPLATION OF THE MERCIES OF GOD."

This book would hardly be complete without some account of the above work. It is a small 12mo volume of 146 pages, with an engraved frontispiece. It is written—excepting the three pieces of verse which I have already printed—in a kind of unrhymed verse, which is curiously suggestive of the style of Whitman's "Leaves of Grass," particularly in the frequent passages in which the author enumerates or catalogues, as the American poet does, every object he can think of which bears any relation to his theme. There were, of course, more points of unlikeness than of likeness between the two poets, but they at least resembled each other in their invincible optimism, as well as in the points mentioned above. Whitman could not have known of the existence of the "Serious and Patheticall Contemplation"; but had it been accessible to him, it might well have been suspected that he was under some obligations to it.

The booklet consists of a series of "Thanksgivings" for the Body, the Soul, the Glory of God's Works, the Blessedness of God's Ways, the Wisdom of His Word, &c. There is much poetry and beauty of expression in these "Thanksgivings," and they are valuable also for the light which they occasionally throw upon passages in the poems which might else seem obscure. Thus the following passages from the "Thanksgiving for the Body" may be profitably compared with "The Salutation" and "Wonder":

I will praise Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made,  
marvellous are Thy works; and that my Soul knoweth  
right well.

My substance was not hid from Thee when I was made in  
secret and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the  
earth,

Thine eyes did see my substance yet being unperfect; and in  
thy book all my members were written; which in con-  
tinuance were fashioned when as yet there was none of  
them.

\* \* \* \* \*

O Lord!

Thou hast given me a body,  
Wherein the glory of Thy Power shineth,  
Wonderfully composed above the beasts,  
Within distinguished into useful parts,  
Beautified without with many ornaments.

Limbs rarely pois'd,

And made for Heaven:

Arteries fill'd

With celestial spirits:

Veins wherein blood floweth,

Refreshing all my flesh,



Like rivers :  
Sinews fraught with the mystery  
Of wonderful strength,  
Stability,  
Feeling.  
O blessed be Thy glorious Name !  
That Thou hast made it  
A Treasury of Wonders,  
Fit for its several Ages ;  
For Dissections,  
For Sculptures in Brass,  
For Draughts in Anatomy,  
For the contemplation of the Sages.

I quote the following passage from "A Thanksgiving and Prayer for the Nation" not merely because it is fine in itself, but also because it affords us yet another interesting glimpse of the author's personality :

O Lord, the children of my people are Thy peculiar treasures,  
Make them mine, O God, even while I have them,  
My lovely companions, like Eve in Eden !  
So much my treasure that all other wealth is without them  
But dross and poverty.  
Do they not adorn and beautifie the World,  
And gratify my Soul which hateth Solitude !  
Thou, Lord, hast made thy servant a sociable creature, for  
which I praise thy name,  
A lover of company, a delighter in equals ;  
Replenish the inclination which Thyself hath implanted,  
And give me eyes  
To see the beauty of that life and comfort  
Wherewith those by their actions  
Inspire the nations.  
Their Markets, Tillage, Courts of Judicature, Marriages, Feasts  
and Assemblies, Navys, Armies,

Priests and Sabbaths, Trades and Business, the voice of the  
Bridegroom, Musical Instruments, the light of Candle  
and the grinding of Mills

Are comfortable, O Lord, let them not cease.

The riches of the land are all the materials of my felicity  
their hands :

They are my Factors, Substitutes, and Stewards ;

Second Selves, who by Trade and Business animate the  
wealth,

Which else would be dead and rust in my hands ;

But when I consider, O Lord, how they come unto the  
Temples, fill thy Courts, and sing Thy praises,

O how wonderful they then appear !

What Stars,

Enflaming Suns,

Enlarging Seas

Of Divine Affection,

Confirming Paterns,

Infusing Influence,

Do I feel in these !

Who are the shining light

Of all the land (to my very Soul :)

Wings and Streams

Carrying me unto Thee,

The Sea of Goodness from whence they came.

Have we not here a very remarkable anticipation  
the leading thought of Whitman's "Leaves of Grass" ?  
Do we not see in both poets the same deep love of, and  
delight in, humanity, the same feeling of comradeship  
and brotherhood with all men, the same hunger for  
sympathy and reciprocal affection, the same pleasure  
in the common things of life and nature, and the same  
frank acceptance of things as they are, and not as they  
might be ? I have said that there is more likeness

than likeness between the poets—but is it really so ? Does not the above passage show that beneath all apparent differences there was a fundamental resemblance in their characters ? To say the least, there was this resemblance—that both of them found life supremely well worth living, and never doubted, even when the clouds were blackest, that the sun was shining beyond them.

THE WILL OF THOMAS TRAHERNE, AS REGISTERED IN THE PREROGATIVE COURT OF CANTERBURY

MEMORANDUM that Thomas Traherne late of Teddington in the County of Midd Clerk deceased in the time of the sickness whereof he dyed and vpon or about the Seaven and Twentyth of September 1674 having sent for John Berdo Gent to come to him the said Thomas Traherne then lying sick at the Lady Bridgmans house in Teddington and the said Mr Berdo being come vnto him he the said Thomas Traherne being then of perfect mind and memory vsed these or the like words to the said Mr. Berdo viz<sup>t</sup> I haue sent for you to make my Will for mee or to that effect Whereupon the said Mr Berdo asked of him the said Mr Thomas Traherne whether he would haue it made in Writing To which the said Thomas Traherne answered in these or the like words viz<sup>t</sup> Noe I haue not so much but that I can dispose of it by Word of Mouth or to that effect And the said Thomas Traherne being then of perfect mind and memory by Word of Mouth with an intent to make his Will and to settle and dispose of his Goods and Estate did vtter and speake these or the like words viz<sup>t</sup> I desire my Lady Bridgman and her daughter the Lady Charlott should haue each of them a Ring And to you (speaking to the said Mr. Berdo) I give Tenn

Pounds and to Mrs Cockson Tenn shillings and to Phillipp Landman ffyve shillings and to John Rowland the Gardiner ffyve shillings and to Mary the Laundry maid ffyve shillings and to all the rest of the servants half a crowne apeece. My best Hatt I give it to my brother Phillipp And sister (speaking to Mrs Susan Traherne the wife of his brother Phillipp which Susan was then present) I desire you would keepe it for him And all the rest of my Clothes that is worth your acceptance I give to you And for those that are not worth your accepting I would have you to giue them to Phillipp Landman or to whome you please with my old Hatt All my Books I give to my brother Phillipp And (still speaking to the said Mrs Susan then present) I make you and my brother Phillipp my whole Executors which words or the like in effect The said Thomas Traherne being then of perfect mind and memory did then utter Animo testandi and with an intent that the same should stand and be as and for his last Will and Testament in the presence and hearing of John Berdo Alice Cockson and Mary Linum.  
John Berdo Alice Cockson The Mark of Mary Linum.

Proved at London 22 Oct 1674 by Susan Traherne, one of the Executors, to whom administration was granted, power being reserved of making the like grant to Philip Traherne, the other executor, should he ask for the same.

*Books Written or Edited by  
Bertram Dobell*



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paper, 12s.

SIDELIGHTS  
ON  
CHARLES LAMB

THIS work contains much new matter relating to Charles Lamb, his works and his friends. It comprises a number of essays, poems, and short articles, some of which are certainly by Charles Lamb, while others are probably by him. Some of the pieces are very curious. One of them, which is undoubtedly from the pen of Charles Lamb, tells, under the guise of a humorous fiction, the story of a curious and hitherto unknown incident in the author's life. Two very remarkable pieces entitled "An Appeal from the Shades" and "Hints for Whist-players," are, if not by Lamb, quite worthy of him, and wonderful imitations of his style. Other pieces contained in the volume, whether written by Lamb or by imitators of his style, will be found to be of quite remarkable interest and curiosity.

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